

Oh no! After I Reincarnated, My Moms Became Son-cons!

vol.8 – Epic of the Hero King: Flames of the
Explosion

by 川香麻辣鸡肉锅

[Novel Updates](#)

Translation Group: [Lord Obsidian](#)

Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)

Ch. 00 (Prologue)

The journey back felt more tiring. Perhaps I felt a sort of emptiness now that the job was over. When I suddenly woke up at night, I came to realise that there was nothing to do tomorrow. Luna was next to me. Underneath was the bed I was familiar with in the Royal Capital. The flames in the fireplace flickered. Overhead was a luxurious red bed curtain. I needed to think for a moment before telling myself I was already safe. I had returned.

‘Whenever I recall what took place in the desert, I can’t help but feel as though sand was blowing onto my face. While I didn’t achieve my end goal, I don’t have any regrets. I don’t have any regrets about the experience. To the contrary, I feel proud.’

‘It was the first time I didn’t rely on someone else’s strength, after all. I didn’t call for Mommy Vyvyan in the end, and Mommy Elizabeth didn’t provide me with any support in the end... Other than financially... I did everything myself, from the preparatory phase to the massacre in the desert. The experience has empowered me with confidence. I can resolve these situations with my strength, alone, now. I could get other vassal states to respect me.’

‘That is enough.’

I took in a deep breath when I saw Troy City up ahead.

‘We’re finally back here after a short rest stop at the Royal Capital. This place gives me a blissful feeling as if returning home now.’

Luna sat on one side and looked at Troy City. She softly remarked, “We are finally home...”

I chuckled. I looked at Luna and remarked, “Yeah, we’re home. Let’s go, Luna. We’re home now.”

Luna responded with a long sigh before looking at me with a smile and saying, “It is so nice to be home. Now the princess will take care of you tomorrow, and I can have a long vacation. I apologise Your Majesty, but I am a too exhausted.”

I nodded. I stroked her head and replied, “All right. It’s been a rough journey

for you, Luna. Have a good rest for the next two days... I'm not going to get a chance to rest, though. I need to see Nier, then Her Majesty, then Lucia, and then Her Highness..."

"Hehe, you truly are very busy, Your Majesty." Luna giggled then said, "I hope you will be able to get some good rest then, Your Majesty... Ah, Your Majesty, people have come to welcome you!"

We rode our horses over. A team of people dressed in white were already at the entrance. I recognised the white silhouettes. It was the Valkyries' uniform. White uniforms and white steeds with no fancy decorations. That was the most formal reception the Valkyries gave. I remember when I first came to humanity's lands. I was welcomed by Nier alone. It appears that the Empress is here to receive me this time.

My men's uniforms were torn and tattered. Most of them have already bought new clothes to wear, because the sandstorm blew any loose clothing they had away. But nonetheless, all of them maintained their spirit. Although they weren't neatly lined up, our team still maintained a gallant spirit after the fighting.

'I think Mom will understand that.'

"Your Majesty, His Majesty's team has arrived."

"Really? Really...? Hurry and come take a look. Is my clothes worn properly...? How about my expression...? Mm... What do I do...? What do I do...? Would it be a bad idea to hug my son in front of so many people...? I... I want to kiss him..."

Castell helped Her Majesty adjust her cape that never had a problem in the first place, for the fifth time. Then he smiled helplessly and replied, "That would better be saved for the bedroom. It is not too appropriate to do that sort of stuff in front of the Valkyries."

The Empress paused and then revealed a very disappointed and eager expression. She looked at her hand then looked below her horse carriage where Nier was all fidgety. She sighed and said, "Why can Nier hug him but not me? I want to hug him at these moments, too.... Why...? I'm his mother for that matter..."

Castell replied with a helpless smile, “That is because Miss Nier is His Majesty’s wife, while you are the Empress of the Rosvenor Empire.”

The Empress unhappily leaned back on the backrest, sighed and said to herself, “I want to be able to act without reserve and candidly as Nier does... It’s natural for me to want to hug my child at times like this... Why can’t I...? I knew I should’ve come alone.”

“Because besides being his majesty’s mother, you are also the mother of the empire.”

“But I only want to be my son’s mother.”

The Empress sighed and didn’t say anything after. Castell looked at the Empress with a slightly sad look. He didn’t know what to say. At the same time, her behaviour made it impossible for him to say anything else. Back then, the Empress only needed the empire. She was willing to forsake anything to ensure the prosperity of the empire. But now she didn’t even want her throne for the sake of her child.

‘She’s changed so much.’

‘Could it be that Her Majesty views His Majesty with more importance than the empire she fought for? If that is the case, if I was to say something to her, she probably wouldn’t say anything back. His Majesty shouldn’t have any wild ambitions at present, but once he does, it’ll be too frightening to even think about.’

‘That said, His Majesty seems to really respect his mother so it’s unlikely he’ll do something to Her Majesty.’

‘That would be for the best.’

“Your Majesty!!!!”

I dismounted and hugged Nier, who threw herself at me. She sobbed as she leapt at me and tightly hugged me as though she was fusing her body with mine. I gently hugged her back.

‘I’ve reached safety, I’m home now, and I’m hugging Nier, yet a fear dwells within me.’

I hugged Nier tightly. I felt her warmth, and everything about her. Everything that occurred in the desert replayed itself in my memories, scaring me more than I could put into words. If I had made a single mistake, I might not be able to stand here hugging my loved one right now.

'This is good. I'm so glad. My love is still by my side.'

"I'm back, Nier."

I only realised my voice was hoarse when I spoke.

Nier tightly hugged me, bit my ear and in her hoarse and blissful voice murmured, "Uhm! Uhm! Welcome home, Your Majesty. Welcome home... Your Majesty, I was always waiting for your return. I kept on waiting... I kept on... I, Princess Nier Rosvenor Galadriel, have come to welcome you home, Your Majesty. Please follow me into the city."

'I don't know why I feel so happy being welcomed home by Nier every time. The first impression she gave me was stunning, after all. If my love for Lucia developed as a result of us being together for a long time and going through ordeals, then my love for Nier was when she appeared before me and bowed to salute me.'

'Uhm. I'm back, Nier.'

'Nier as she is in this moment is about the same as she was back then, only that she's now my Princess.'

Ch. 01

“Son, come over here and let me see you.”

When Nier and I reached the side of the horse carriage, I saw Mommy Elizabeth’s excited look where she wanted to smile but fought to maintain a stern look. I went up to the side of the carriage and saluted her. I respectfully said, “I am back, Your Majesty.”

Mom reached her hand out to cup my face. She affectionately stroked it as she said, “It’s good that you’re back. It’s good that you’re back. M(ommy)-... I missed you a lot, son. Head back and rest up well now.”

Elizabeth didn’t show me much affection in front of the crowds, just like when I first met her. I nodded and then mounted my horse. Just as I was about to ride off, Nier grabbed onto my reins and mounted my horse to sit in front of me, which was basically the same as sitting in my lap... I never thought Nier would still be so dexterous even when she’s pregnant. She virtually mounted the horse smoothly by leaping up from where she stood.

Because of her sudden manoeuvre, the Valkyries behind all went pale in the face. It seemed that they were the ones responsible for guarding Nier, wait, no, Nier’s child.

I let Nier sit in my lap and wrap her arms around my neck. I gently touched her belly and asked, “Are you all right?”

I’ve only been gone for a month, so Nier’s body hasn’t shown any obvious changes, so I guess it’s not all that strange that she leapt up onto the horse so dexterously. Nier giggled. She then placed her hand on mine and replied, “I’m fine with you by my side. Otherwise, I can’t sleep and keep missing you.”

I smiled helplessly.

‘I really have no idea if it’s her body that misses me or her heart that misses me. Maybe both?’

I lowered my head and gave her a kiss on her lips. She raised her head up to

kiss me back, then pushed me away and hid her now red face. She softly said, “Your Majesty... Wait till we get back... to do this sort of stuff.... the Valkyries are around us right now... I’m a little embarrassed...”

‘I reckon your previous image has been long gone in the eyes of the Valkyries...’

Right now, she’s the Nier, who’s flirtatiously snuggled up in my arms. Back then though, she was the Valkyries’ sword instructor who cut people as though they’re grass. I’d say her flirtatious mannerisms have refreshed her image in the eyes of the Valkyries countless times already.

The Valkyries looked in my direction. Their gazes were certainly a little strange.

As she watched Nier and her son enter the city together, Elizabeth clenched her teeth and then kicked a side of the horse carriage, creating a cracking sound that came from the wooden carriage. She nearly kicked a hole in the carriage. Castell jolted as it gave him a fright. He looked at Elizabeth next to him and nervously asked, “Your Majesty, what orders do you have?”

“Orders? None. I’m just really angry.”

Elizabeth threw another aggressive kick, this time making a hole in the wooden door. All of the Valkyries got frightened and hopped off their horses. Castell quickly pressed his hands down on Elizabeth’s shoulders. Whenever Elizabeth gets angry, like this, she always vents by rampaging and breaking even more things. If he didn’t stop her now, the carriage probably wouldn’t make it back to the palace in one piece.

“What are you angry about? Get off the carriage and go resolve it.”

Castell didn’t have the foggiest clue as to exactly why Elizabeth was angry. To be fair, Elizabeth shouldn’t be angry.

‘Her son she missed day and night has finally returned. Shouldn’t she be all smiles for the entire day? Why is she angry all of a sudden? There were no signs beforehand either.’

Castell has great observation skills, but he couldn’t figure out what made Elizabeth so angry this time.

“It’s got nothing to do with you. It’s my own problem. No. Actually, my anger has to do with all of you.” Elizabeth looked at Castell with a cold gaze and fumed, “I’m my son’s mother. I’m his mother. Why do I have to be considerate of your feelings and be indifferent to my son?! My son has just returned from the desert, and I can’t hug and kiss him? Nier is just a Valkyrie, yet she doesn’t have to pretend and can candidly express her feelings before him? My love for my son is inferior to no one’s!”

“Your Majesty!” Castell raised his voice, emphasising her title. He looked at Elizabeth and explained, “Miss Nier is not a Valkyrie now. She is His Majesty’s Princess. It is totally reasonable for a mother to love her son, but Your Majesty, you are our Empress. You must show that you are the Empress in front of the empire, not a mother.”

“Oh, is that so? So what you’re saying is that I shouldn’t be the Empress?” Elizabeth coldly chuckled then whipped her hand and asked, “Castell, in your opinion, how much longer will it take before my son can become a qualified Emperor.”

“I would think when His Majesty is a little older. Based off of His Majesty’s performance in the desert this time, I would conclude that His Majesty is very smart, but lacks experience. However, His Majesty’s accomplishments and the way he carries himself can convince the vassal states to respect him. Continuing on in that manner, His Majesty just needs to visit all the vassal states and then he will be able to naturally and smoothly succeed the throne.”

Elizabeth shook her head and responded, “I’d be old by then, wouldn’t I? I’m not Vyvyan. I don’t have such a long lifespan. I want to spend time with my son and grandchild for some time. I’m already tired. I became more and more tired after my son returned. I no longer want to stay here. I want to pass the throne on to my son. I want to vacate the throne.”

Castell looked at Her Majesty. Usually his brain would be roaring at him. This time, however, he looked at Elizabeth with a particularly serious and calm gaze. He knew that Elizabeth wasn’t joking. She was speaking to him about the topic with sincerity. Castell looked at Her Majesty in a very calm way and replied, “Your Majesty, you cannot just do that on a whim. If you pass the throne on to His Majesty now, that is the equivalent of killing him. His Majesty is not ready

for it. Do you plan to pass the throne on to him, like that?”

“Let’s wait until he’s ready, then. My son is very smart and brilliant. He’s my son, so he will be superior to me. I can wait until he succeeds the throne and I can see his efforts. I’m truly very happy. I was worried about him leaving this time, but at the same time, consoled, as well as a little sad. I never saw my son when he was young and he’s grown up all of a sudden. Sometimes I feel really jealous of Nier. Nier can legitimately live with my son and spend her life with him, while I can only watch him from behind.

Elizabeth let out a long sigh then looked at the pattern on the ceiling of the carriage. She hopelessly went on, “I want to walk with my son through his journey of life, as well. I don’t want to be the Empress anymore. I really hope my son can be ready soon. That way, I might be able to prepare dinner at home and wait for him to return. I’ll be able to look after my grandchild with Nier, too. At night, I’ll be able to take a stroll with my son. Just exactly when will I be able to lead such a beautiful life?”

Castell looked at the Empress’s face. He went to open his mouth, but didn’t say anything in the end. It appears that the Empress’ life is similar to the life of commoners. Even if it was a bit more extravagant, it would only be the life of nobles.

But judging from His Majesty’s slightly flimsy silhouette as he advanced, Castell couldn’t tell when Her Majesty would be able to lead that life which seemed so simple.

It might be in a few months. It might be in a few years. It might be in a decade or so. It might even be decades away.

Or maybe, a lifetime away.

Ch. 02

Luna made a small bow while looking at us and saying, “All right then, I shall take my leave now, Your Majesty, Princess. His Majesty’s washed clothes are over there. Another maid will bring tomorrow’s breakfast over. I apologise for having to trouble you to look after His Majesty, Princess.”

Nier nodded and replied, “All right, Luna. It’s been rough on you, too, having to journey so far with my husband. Have a good rest tomorrow. I shall take care of him tomorrow!”

I nodded then looked at Nier next to me and said, “Sorry, Nier. I might not be able to keep you company, because I have a feeling Her Majesty will keep me there.”

Today is her majesty’s private invite. There will be nobody but Nier and I. I don’t think I’ll be able to leave this sort of banquet. Once the banquet is over, I’ll definitely be called to her room. Then Elizabeth, who’ll be drunk, will sleep holding me; so, I won’t get to keep Nier company tonight.

Nier nodded her head with disappointment. However, she quickly regained her spirits and replied, “I understand, Dear. I’m all right. You were off far away before, but you’re right next to me this time so I won’t lose sleep, because you’re not next to me. I know that you must go to Her Majesty.”

“Thank you for being understanding, Nier.” I kissed Nier on her head then held her hand to leave together. Luna pulled the door open. From behind, she bowed with a smile and said, “Please enjoy dinner. Goodbye, Your Majesty.”

I turned my head around to see Luna smiling with a tinge of loneliness.

‘I couldn’t say anything to Luna. Our relationship was no longer what it was in the desert now. We’re now only Prince and personal servant. My Nier is next to me. I, therefore, can’t be as intimate with Luna as I was in the desert.’

“Ah, Luna.”

I stopped in my tracks and turned around to call out to Luna. Luna looked up at me feeling somewhat surprised. She didn’t know what to say. She seemed to

never expect me to turn around and call out to her. I looked at her face. I gulped my saliva and after a pause, said, “Come back to work soon, okay? You’re my only personal servant. Without you, my life is a mess, so resume work soon, okay?”

Luna froze up for a moment, and then a bright smile gradually surfaced on her face. With the sun coming down, her smile was similar to the one on that night in the desert. That night, Luna hugged me tightly, and it was the first time we embraced each other and enveloped each other in our love for each other under the moonlight, not because of my condition, but our feelings. But that was our only night, as we had to then return to Troy City.

Luna responded with a firm nod. With her eyes shining, she smiled and responded, “Sure, Your Majesty!”

“Goodbye then, Luna.”

I waved my hand, grabbed Nier and turned back around. I didn’t add anything after that or even look at her again. Nier looked at me with suspicion, but didn’t comment.

‘Luna and I are now back to our master and servant relationship, and nothing more.’

‘However, she’s my only personal servant. She will be the only one ever. If Luna leaves or is not around, I won’t ever have another personal servant. For me, “personal servant,” is a title reserved for only Luna, alone.’

“Is it ready?! I personally prepared this dish for my son. Do not drop a single drop! Have you all taste tested it? It’s fine, right?! Uhm, uhm. Remember, I personally made this for my son. None of you had a hand in it, understood?! Understood?!”

The chef looked at the floor and trembled. Elizabeth stood with arms akimbo and watched the maids at the side, sort out the dishes. The dishes don’t look bad. They weren’t drool inducing, but they should be normally edible. It’s no longer that rubber soup anymore. But we’ll have to see if these dishes were prepared by Elizabeth. Since she said she did, let’s just take her word for it.

“Uhm, uhm, the dishes are ready. What else... what else... Ah, wine, wine. I

must prepare good wine. You won't let me hug my son outside? Fine. I'll hug him in my room then."

Elizabeth grumpily tossed a few bottles of wine into the water barrel then looked to the kitchen and thought about what else she could give her son.

'Frankly, I don't ask for much. Just a meal is fine. When Castell came to see us, he wore a "You're on your own. Good luck." sort of look and informed us that Her Majesty, personally, prepared the dishes this time. I was more terrified than I was touched... Mommy Elizabeth's rubber soup still gives me nightmares today. I don't think I will ever forget that strange smell.'

'That's why I was honestly reluctant to bring Nier along... If by chance... If something bad happens after Nier eats the food, what are we to do...? Nier has two lives right now! We must be careful!'

'I noticed that the dishes could be considered normal when they were served up, though. How shall I put it? They were very ordinary? It makes sense, though. It's a massive improvement if something mom prepared was edible. I'm very satisfied with the food this time, since I came to the table feeling as though I returned from death.'

"Son, how is it? How is it? Is it good or not?"

I raised my head and sincerely nodded. I saw Elizabeth clasp her face with a silly smile as she looked at me as if she was going to explode with happiness. I replied, "It really does taste good. Thank you, Mom."

"Hehehe... hehehe... Have some more if you like it. If you like it, Mom will cook for you every day, so that you don't have to eat that's Elf's food anymore... Cooking? Big deal. I can cook now..."

Elizabeth wore an extremely blissful smile as she pushed everything over to me. It was virtually comparable to having the entire desk slammed on my face. I started to panic a little...

'Am I supposed to finish all of this...? You're going to kill me!!'

Fortunately, Nier helped me finish some of it. As she was a Valkyrie, she had very low requirements for food, so she didn't have an opinion on the taste.

'It seem that I need to nurture Nier's taste standards now. For Nier, up until now, all foods were to be "eaten", and all wine was to be "drunk". That's not how a Princess should be.'

"After dinner, come with me for a walk, son. Then we'll have a bath and rest. Sleep in my room tonight. I feel bad about Nier, but a mother should get priority over a wife. Therefore, bear with it for another night tonight, Nier."

The instant I placed my fork down, the Empress stood up and tightly grabbed hold of my hand. I couldn't have fled even if I wanted to. Nier looked at the Empress' determined eyes. She silently lowered her head and answered, "Understood, Your Majesty. I shall return to the palace to rest, then. Goodbye."

Despite Nier now being a Princess, before the Empress, she still replies the same way a Valkyrie would.

The Empress nodded and then pulled me up the same way you would yank a torn doll up. She dragged me by my arm as she headed out and said, "Let's go then, Son. I want to hear what happened in the desert. I want to hear everything. It's slightly cold outside, but exposing yourself to the cold before getting in a hot bath is even more soothing. Let's go, Son, let's go."

'All right! All right! Gentle, Mom! Gentle! You could rip my arm off like this, you know?! Save me! Save me!'

'I felt my body was at risk after leaving the desert once again...'

Ch. 03

“Uhh... Mom.....”

I looked straight ahead at the mist sifting atop the surface of the water. I sat properly as though I was faced with the biggest test of my life.

‘Well, in reality, it really was the biggest test in my life. No, the biggest test for my view of life and my morals.’

‘How shall I describe it? When I was with the elves, I was completely immobilised once I entered the water. Forget moving my body in the water, I couldn’t even blink. I could only look at Vyvyan’s perfect body. I couldn’t touch it. Even if I did touch her body, I wouldn’t have felt anything. That’s why I quickly got used to Vyvyan hugging me as she helped me wash, since I was as an calm old monk, who had settled down.’

‘With humanity’ however... It’s different...,

‘I’m fine here in humanity’s waters. I don’t have any physical impairments when I’m in water, so I don’t want to bath with Elizabeth, because she would try and do something to me every now and then. But I couldn’t reject her this time as I had just returned. I did my best to fulfil mom’s requests; because if I didn’t. Elizabeth would be very sad...

‘But I don’t want to be taking a bath sitting in mom’s embrace!!’

My head was buried deep in her valleys of bliss. I could feel her warm body and the water moving about on the back of my head.

‘Why was I looking straight ahead? Because if I just turned my head a little, I would see those pink cherries we have between May and July. What shall I say, that mom maintains her figure and skin well, or is the elven spring water Vyvyan supplies her with effective? I don’t feel that Elizabeth is a woman almost forty whatsoever.’

Nier has a really good body. Since she trains all year round, she doesn’t have any excess fat, not to mention her natural perfect ratios. Elizabeth, however, had an even more voluptuous body than Nier. And right now, that beautiful

body had me locked tightly. Her two arms were wrapped around my waist. Underneath the water, my legs were rested on top of moms. This feeling of skin contact with warm water in between made me suffer, but at the same time, aroused. Most importantly, though, was... Mom's hands were in front of my waist. If I moved...

'I think my body is going to be raging with lust after I finish bathing...'

I had nowhere to place my hands so I rested them gently on mom's legs which allowed me to feel mom's warmth and smoothness...

"Hey, Mom..."

"Hmm? What's wrong Son?"

Mom poked her head over my shoulder and spoke, so I felt her breath in my ear, causing me to jerk my body. My final line of defence was taken down by Mom. Mom's body and mine froze up at the same time because Mom's hand on my waist...

"Hng..."

We both got awkward and didn't know what to say. I wore a depressed look on my face, wishing for nothing more than to dunk my head in the water and drown myself...

'It's just shameful to react, like this, in front of your Mom! So shameful!! How am I going to face mom in the future now?! How will Mom see me if I feel this way toward Mom...?'

"Umm... This... Mm..."

I stuttered to try and explain myself, but nonetheless, nothing came out in the end, because I had no idea what to say...

'How am I going to explain it? I couldn't contain myself, because your body is too beautiful mom...?'

'I shouldn't be feeling this way even if Mom's body was even better!!'

'This is a morality bottom line problem!!'

"Mommy... Mommy can understand. It's just... Mommy never expected this."

Mom giggled but didn't let go; instead, she hugged me even tighter and rested her head on my shoulder. She looked to one side and spaced out a little. She then softly said, "Son, did you know? Mommy's impression of you is still a little boy wrapped in that red cape. You were particularly gentle at the time. You would never bite me. After you were full, you would give me a smile... You have no idea how much I loved you at the time. I could've just looked at you all day, hugged you all day... But I couldn't do it. I couldn't stay by your side. Son, your history, where you grew up, will forever be a missing chapter in Mommy's heart... Mommy... Mommy always looks at you and thinks, are you truly that child?"

I didn't speak.

'To be frank, it's very normal for Elizabeth to feel this way. Elizabeth didn't show up during my childhood. Despite Troy and Elizabeth sharing a blood bond, Troy didn't even know that she was his mom. Troy didn't have any memories of Elizabeth in his memories. When Elizabeth who gave birth to Troy saw him again, he was already an adult.'

'For a mother who didn't get to raise her child, she'll inevitably feel that he isn't her child.'

"Mommy didn't get to see you grow up, but Mommy will get to see you grow this time." Mom tightly hugged me as if she was hugging an infant. She gently rocked me as she softly continued, "My son is a qualified adult and man now, since... Hehe, Mommy is very happy about this. Mommy is very happy that you like Mommy. But Mommy still wants to watch you eventually grow to become a qualified Emperor. Mommy didn't get to watch you grow up, so Mommy wants to at least get to see you slowly grow up and become a qualified Emperor. That way, Mommy will be to take care of you in the future without any qualms."

Mom gently rubbed her face against mine and bit my ear with a look of yearning. She tightly hugged me and blissfully told me, "You're Mommy's only child and Mommy's only family. Mommy loves you. Mommy loves you too much. Mommy doesn't want the throne any longer. Mommy wants to be able to tightly hug you when you return. Mommy wants to be the first one to rush past everyone to hug and kiss you; but, Mommy can't do that right now. If Mommy tries to do that now, Mommy will be stopped. Perhaps Mommy can

only be a qualified mom when Mommy is no longer an Empress, so... son, become Mommy's child as soon as possible."

'While that sounds contradictory, it's not at all.'

'At the moment, I'm Her Majesty's Prince. Only in the future can I be Elizabeth's son.'

I turned my head sideways, looked at mom's face and sincerely responded, "Uhm, alright, Mom."

Elizabeth giggled and then suddenly leaned over my shoulder.

I felt an electric current run through me as a pair of lips that carried the moist, warm water and their own warmth make contact with mine. I froze up in mom's embrace, as I felt mom's body and warmth. I appreciated Mom's charming kiss that was akin to a flash of thunder.

"Hehe..."

Mom giggled as she stroked my lips and a red flush was visible on her face. Her eyes looked similar to Nier's eyes two months' ago. She softly said, "Now I see why that woman likes to kiss you so much. Kissing you makes me feel so blissful... I feel like... my entire body is floating..."

"Mom... Umm..."

I felt that I couldn't contain my rationality. Warm water, strong wine and a beauty. Those three things which can cause benevolent men and men of aspiration to fall were all thrown at me at once. At this very moment, every single one of my cells was shouting at me, telling me to push this black-haired beauty down... I never imagined Elizabeth who was always imposing and strict could be so gentle and alluring...

"Son... in a little bit, come keep Mommy company... Mommy can finally sleep in peace tonight..."

Ch. 04

‘Elizabeth can sleep well without a hitch when she holds me, but I can’t.’

‘That’s because of Elizabeth’s behaviour. They’re similar to Vyvyan’s, but not as trained. Vyvyan likes to sleep holding me, as well; but, perhaps it’s because she’s done it enough times that I can still breathe even when she buries me in her breasts. I don’t resist, either. Being held by Vyvyan also gives me an odd reassuring feeling, making me feel as though I don’t want to get back up once I’ve lay down.’

‘I can’t say the same for Elizabeth, though! Being hugged by her is akin to being grappled in a fight and clung to. Though something passes by my face every now and then, nobody can enjoy it when they’re on the verge of death! I felt that I might never wake up again if I were to shut my eyes. Further, due to the stifling feeling, every time I fall asleep, I have all sorts of nightmares such as being hacked to death in the desert and then tossed into the sand to be buried and so forth...’

‘That’s not all. I wake up with an incredibly sore back the next day, because Mom clings to me all night. She also doesn’t respect my dignity as a man. She keeps squirming with her body and even leg locks my hips... I couldn’t fall asleep like that. Even if I could fall asleep, I’d still be concerned if my hands subconsciously traverse into forbidden territory...’

‘And so, I didn’t get any real rest all night. When I bid Mom goodbye the next morning, though, I noticed that she looked radiant as Nier does after a couple of nights of grappling in bed with me... It takes me a long time to slowly warm up in the mornings, while Nier is full of vigour.’

‘It seems that I really need to give my body some proper rest, or else I’ll accidentally die in bed, instead of the battlefield... According to some underground news, Nier apparently drugged my drinks every day when she wanted to get pregnant... Said underground news came from the doctor in the palace. Therefore, I would say that it is highly trustworthy...’

Alice looked at Her Majesty walk over, made a small bow and greeted her,

“You look very radiant today, Your Majesty.”

“Yeah. My son is back, so I’m in a great mood. Is something the matter, Alice?”

Elizabeth turned around with a smile and touched Alice’s head. While they’re about the same age, Alice seemed to really like it... Of course, that was only if it was Her Majesty who touched her head. If it was someone else that did, their arm would’ve already been ripped off by Alice... Alice looked at Elizabeth and chuckled. She responded, “Your Majesty, I have come for a matter with the Valkyrie squad.”

“Can’t you just handle their matters? You’re the captain of the Valkyrie squad. If you want to do something, just go ahead and do it.”

Elizabeth had honestly stopped paying much attention to the Valkyries. You can’t blame her, since she can’t take everything into consideration with almost a thousand Valkyries. As such, giving orders and daily life matters were handled by Alice. Her majesty was basically a totem that acted as a commander now.

Alice essentially controlled all of the Valkyries; however, her majesty trusted Alice while Alice was absolutely loyal to the Empress, so there weren’t any issues.

“No. Your Majesty, this matter must be handled by you, mainly because it involves His Majesty’s guard unit. If I make a decision on my own, it might cause His Majesty to be angry with the Valkyries.”

The Empress lingered for a moment before laughing. Pleased, she rubbed Alice’s head and replied, “Not bad, not bad. Alice, you’re starting to consider consequences and see things from more perspectives now. Good. Very good. Hmm, so what is it? Is there some conflict between the Valkyries and his Guard Unit or something else?”

Alice sternly explained, “It is about the new sword instructor we appointed to His Majesty’s guard unit and his Guard Unit’s leader being in a romantic relationship. That is the second Valkyrie now. If we keep losing Valkyrie sword instructors this way, there will be no way to compensate for the missing role. Furthermore, Valkyries do not involve themselves with other powers. This creates a very bad ethos for the Valkyrie squad. Nier, I mean, the Princess

created the initial bad example. If we do not punish Shusia, the Valkyries will become a little lax with their ethos.”

“I see.”

Elizabeth nodded, but didn’t say anything. Alice waited. Normally, Her Majesty is very sensitive about her Valkyries. She’d never allow there to be any internal issues with the squad. Shusia having a romantic relationship with someone was not permitted for Valkyries. Alice thought the empress would be furious, call Shusia over and tell her to kill herself.

“She’s in a relationship with my son’s Guard Unit’s captain, right...?”

Alice replied seriously, “That is correct. That creates very bad practices within the Valkyrie squad. All of the Valkyries are girls. If this encourages them to pursue love, how will they be able to guarantee your safety? Plus, guards with private motives cannot exist! A tool which gains self-awareness must be disposed of! Your Majesty, please order Shusia to kill herself to give the distracted Valkyries a warning! That way, we can bring the state of the Valkyries under control!”

“I see. But forget it. There’s nothing bad about them being in a romantic relationship.”

Alice froze in place. She never imagined Her Majesty would respond that way. She thought Her Majesty would become enraged and kill her, or secretly kill her as a means to prevent other things being impacted. There are dozens of ways to kill her, but she never expected to hear “forget it.”

The Valkyries are Her Majesty’s most important guard unit. They were the symbol of Her Majesty’s royal power.

‘She said forget it?!’

The Empress tilted her head. She looked at Alice and with a smile, continued, “Alice, I’ve always been thinking what to do with the Valkyries once I vacate the throne. I just want to peacefully be a mother. I don’t want to see blood or wield a sword anymore. The Valkyries might as well find a good family to marry into. That way, I’ll have done one good deed.”

“Wh-Wh-Wh-What... what did you say...?”

Alice virtually couldn't make out proper words. Everything before her eyes became hazy and she almost lost her footing.

'Is the person in front of me truly the Empress?! Is she really the Empress?! She had to kill countless people to get to where she is today! Why are her eyes so clear and gentle? Why? Why? What happened to the Empress that slaughtered without end?!'

"That's all I have to say. If the Valkyries have someone they like, there's no point in keeping the team, because I don't want to be the Empress anymore. Alice, did you know?! Yesterday, my son was particularly gentle. He was so cute. I just want to be a mother now, not an Empress. I think it's time for my guard unit to gradually break up. I also don't want to see blood anymore. How can I hug my son when I'm covered in blood? Hey! Hey!! Alice! Alice, what's wrong?! Alice! Alice!"

That was the worst day for Alice.

She was dealt one blow after another, causing her to completely pass out...

Ch. 05

“Welcome home, Onii-sama.”

When I got to the palace where I work, I came across Freya ,who happened to be leaving. She smiled when she saw me then bowed and greeted me.

“Ah, Freya. Long-time no see.”

Come to think of it. Freya was the calmest one when she saw me. It was as though I wasn't in the desert fighting for a month, but just went to the elven side to pay Lucia a visit and brought some souvenirs back. I looked at Freya who was smiling and wanted to say something but couldn't.

Freya looked at me and then said, “I am very sorry, Onii-sama, but due to the challenges with my identity, I could not welcome you with Her Majesty. I, therefore, hope that you will not reprimand me for not welcoming you. I actually wanted to see you, Onii-sama, after all...”

I watched Freya lower her head. Though Freya is my adopted-sister, few actually acknowledge her as my adopted-sister. As Her Majesty doesn't make her stance on the matter clear, whenever members of the royal family make an appearance, Freya won't be present if I'm not. I don't think Freya got to see Her Majesty while I was gone.

‘I'm aware of it, but I can't say anything, either. I do feel sorry for Freya, though. Freya is very loyal to me. It's just that Elizabeth doesn't want any other child other than me.’

I hugged Freya and then asked, “I won't find fault with you. To the contrary, I'm a little worried. You weren't present when I came back yesterday, were you? You didn't come back at night, either. Have you been that busy with work recently?”

Freya raised her head up and leaned on my chest, seemingly reluctant to let go. She looked at me while she was leaning on my chest. Her expression was still very serious, nonetheless. She replied, “There have, indeed, been a lot of matters to take care of recently. Did you come to any agreements while in the

desert, Onii-sama? Socina suddenly gave me a trading agreement that they wanted me to sign. Being clueless as to what happened, I did not dare to sign it, and therefore, it is still pending...”

I nodded, “Ah, just agree to it, since I’ve agreed to it.”

‘I think that’s about it for the matter with Socina. I need to make a trip to Socina too, since their lord invited me. I assume there’s business of some sort, or maybe she just wants to speak with me. I’m very interested in Socina, myself. I’ll head there after a one-month break here. ’

“Is that so? I shall ask that you sign it yourself then, Your Majesty.”

Freya didn’t ask me what happened.

‘I was wrestling with whether I should tell Freya about the agreement in the desert or not. I don’t know if Freya will laugh at me after hearing how I obviously became someone’s pawn and got the map snatched right off of me. I don’t think she will, but it’s not a suitable time to be telling a story right now.’

“There are also the preparations for the hunting event. It will soon be early spring. Her Majesty holds a hunting event once annually. All of the rulers of the various vassal states will also come. It will be a most splendorous event. However, how should I put it... Mm... This time, Her Majesty ordered Castell and me to prepare it together. It is my first time organising such a large event, so I feel as though I do not have what it takes to do what I wish.”

Freya smiled embarrassingly then touched her head and continued, “I think we will have to make a trip back to the Royal Capital, since that is where the event will be held. I wonder if you will be participating, Onii-sama... It will begin very soon, in about a week.”

It suddenly hit me.

‘I thought Nara was talking about something else when she said we would meet again soon when we left. So this is what she was referring to. I can’t believe it’s already spring. I thought it was still winter this entire time. But I guess it is. It’s warmer now and the water outside isn’t frozen, so spring must be approaching soon.’

“Primarily large wild animals are hunted for the hunting event, so I presume

there will be dangers involved. As you have just returned from the desert, your body has yet to fully recover, therefore I advise against your participation, Onii-sama. It is enough for you to be a planner and supplier at the Royal Capital.” Freya looked at me and earnestly went on, “Onii-sama, there was no need for me to partake in the planning this time, because it is a hunting event Her Majesty is organising, but she asked me to get involved. You know what that implies, right? It implies that you have to show yourself before all of the vassal states.”

I dawdled for a moment.

‘Honestly, I still have traumas toward the word “hunting”. Last time, we hunted a White Deer King, only for Lucia and me to almost die in the wilderness. But okay, put that aside for a second. Mera died in my arms at the end. I deeply hate the hunting subject and it still hurts me. I will never be able to forget the pain.’

‘Thus, I won’t be hunting anything this time regardless of how I’m expected to perform. I’m going to stay in the Royal Capital in peace. I won’t bother anyone, so don’t come bother me. Mommy Elizabeth might want for me to show myself in front of all of the vassal states this time, but I’m not leaving.’

‘I’m not going no matter how much she wants me to go. I can’t shake off the feeling that something serious will happen if I leave this time.’

“I won’t go hunting.” I resolutely declared my stance. My resolute attitude caused Freya to freeze up.

Freya then chuckled. She replied, “I never thought I would see you so resolute, Your Majesty. Could it be that you are afraid of hunting? Well, it does not matter. After all, you are not really expected to show yourself and hunt. Hunting is her majesty’s pastime. Where you truly need to show yourself is the annual meeting that comes before the hunting event.”

“Annual meeting?”

While looking at me, Freya explained, “Yes. It is a new year, after all. Her Majesty wants all the vassal states to come, too. You will be meeting all of the rulers of the vassal states at the annual meeting. You are the main star this time. It appears that Her Majesty wishes to announce your presence to

everyone. Perhaps she is thinking about how to make you the next Emperor.”

‘I understand that since Mommy Elizabeth has already mentioned it. I mean wanting for me to be the next Emperor that is. I want to say, please find somebody better than me. I’m honestly not modest... wait, shit!! Why are curse words surfacing in my mind all of a sudden?! I think I can do it. I’m not modest. I think this is an opportunity mom prepared for me.’

“This is an opportunity, Onii-sama. Please ensure that you prepare well. Although you do not need to prepare any clothes or ceremonies, what you need to prepare is more abstract. And that is to show them what sort of monarch you wish to become.”

Freya looked at me with a serious look and told me, “Please do not take it lightly, Onii-sama. You must do that if you wish to wear the crown. You must also carefully consider what you want to show them. That is how you must display yourself in order to get the vassal states to obey you. That is what is most important. I apologise, Onii-sama. You have just returned and have yet to rest. Nevertheless, you may not have time to relax as what we must do next is more serious than your journey to the desert.”

Ch. 06

“Wake up, son. Wake up.”

I rubbed my eyes. I could see a gold silhouette in front of me pushing me in my hazy state. Vyvyan, who was in front of me, shook my arm. I looked at her face with puzzlement.

‘Why has Vyvyan appeared before me dressed in a seductive purple night-gown?’

“Wake up. Today’s ceremony is your ascension of the throne ceremony.”

“What...? Ascension...?”

I didn’t have the foggiest idea as to what happened. I blankly looked at Vyvyan in her night gown. I looked at her ample melons dangling in front of me that looked akin to mangosteens wrapped in a purple fruit peel, with a milk-white flesh inside dripping with seduction. I gulped my saliva. My rationality had yet to wake, but my lust was gradually rising up.

I subconsciously reached my hand out and pinched those mangosteens. Vyvyan froze for a moment, and then a red flush appeared on her beautiful face. She pressed her hand on mine. She didn’t push my hand away. She just firmly pressed it on mine. With a blushing face, Vyvyan shyly spoke in a soft voice, “Mommy just told you that it’s not time to be doing this sort of stuff... You’re going to be late...”

I felt my reasoning crumble.

‘Is this a dream or reality? If it’s a dream, why does the feeling in my hand feel so realistic? But if it’s reality, then that’s more frightening... No, no. It must be a dream, because Vyvyan is definitely on the elven side, not here. Well, since it’s a dream, it doesn’t matter what I do right?’

I suddenly reversed our roles and hugged Vyvyan and pulled her down onto my body. Vyvyan sexily moaned. She looked at me with her eyes filled with eagerness. I kissed her, and she responded in a fervent way. We kissed for a while before breaking apart and wiping the marks we gave each other off our

mouths. Vyvyan's body gradually got warmer. Her eyes began to turn red. She looked at me, covered her mouth and quietly said, "Mommy said we can't do this. We'll be late... Dear..."

"Just be late then..."

I aggressively tore open Vyvyan's clothes...

"Wah-!!"

I had a sudden moment of surprise and widened my eyes. I felt a warm sensation. A flower scent that completely calmed me down was right in my face. I could see skin that was clear as marble before my eyes. I felt a sensation where somebody was stroking my head. A few strands of hair were teasing my cheeks. I felt a cold sensation from underneath my blanket.

'It appears that this isn't a dream... There is no shortage of girls around me, so why I am still having this sort of dream...?'

'Wait a second...'

'Why does it feel like I'm being hugged by...'

"Hehehehe..."

Vyvyan seemed to notice me wake up. Vyvyan, who was hugging me, couldn't help but giggle. I shrieked and then attempted to break free, but was locked tightly in Vyvyan's embrace. She buried my head in her breasts, and then gently stroked my head. She mischievously giggled, "It looks like my son was very lonely in the desert to do this to Mommy in your dreams. You can just tell Mommy about this sort of stuff; Mommy won't have any problems, since we are mother and son. I gave you your body. Why must you do it only in dreams? How about it, my son? You want to do it again? The time seems to suit what's in your dream..."

"Let me die!! Let me die!! Why?! Why?! Mom! Why are you here next to me?!!"

'I really want to die! I felt really awkward because of the incident with Elizabeth last night, and I went and enacted my fantasies for mom in her arms?! This is a life tragedy! It's a massacre I can't avoid! Let me die! Let me go die!'

How am I supposed to face my two moms after this?!'

'Eh? Wait. How does Vyvyan know what I did in my dreams?'

Vyvyan pressed my hands onto the bed. She licked her lips and then dived down to kiss me. Her body was gentle and sexy as it was in my dreams. She tightly, yet gently clung to me similarly to a snake. She locked my hips with her legs as though she didn't care what I'd stain her with. Her addicting tongue boldly raged around in my mouth. It was comparable to an animal that came to strut around and prove its dominance. A sensation akin to electric currents flowed through all of my nerves as Vyvyan's fingers delivered them through my body, allowing them to swim around on my body. It caused my body to go limp as if I got electrocuted. I couldn't even raise my hands.

"Fuu... Fuu... Fuu... My son... My son... Mommy feels so blissful to know that you dream of Mommy... Mommy is so happy... Mommy feels so blissful to know you still think of Mommy after getting married... Mommy nearly died from loneliness when you left for a month... Mommy wants to kiss you now."

Vyvyan pressed down on my crotch without any hesitation, causing even breathing to become a challenge for me, as well. She reached her finger deep into my mouth. A strange feeling in my throat, and a feeling of disgust surprisingly made me feel a little good. Vyvyan toyed with my tongue using her finger. She then slowly pulled out her finger covered in my saliva, ran it across my face and then licked it as if she was licking the world's finest wine off of her finger. Her red eyes looked as though they were going to spurt blood.

"But... my son, you have that woman Elizabeth's scent on you... You have that woman's scent on you... Did you bath with her...? Did you sleep with her, too...? That woman... That thieving woman... I'll overlook her stealing my brother... but she went and stole my son, who I already declared mine. It seems that I must teach her a lesson..."

Vyvyan's gaze looked very frightening. It looked as if she could rip Elizabeth to shreds. I couldn't say a word, though. My eyes were fixated on Vyvyan's face. I couldn't say a word.

"But before that... I need to leave my mark on my son first... You came back, yet didn't say a word to Mommy. You handled that very poorly, Son. You think

so, too...? Shouldn't Mommy punish a naughty boy, like you?"

Vyvyan looked at me then dove down and bit my neck.

'No! This is no exchange of blood or sucking blood. She's kissing me with all she's got. No, she was sucking on my neck.'

After a while, Vyvyan raised her head.

'I don't even need to think about it. I'm absolutely certain that I have a hickey there now.'

But it didn't end there. She tore my clothes off and bit my neck. She bit my chest as if she wanted to tear a piece of flesh off. The pain caused me to shudder, but I didn't dare to utter a word. Vyvyan's lips were red with my blood. She then gently stroked the wound left behind by her bite, leaving the mark of a set of teeth on my chest. Vyvyan then wildly licked me while panting heavily...

"Now... She should understand now, right...? My son will forever be my son alone... no matter how he is or what happens. I won't share him... Uhm... Uhm... Remember this mark, Son... No matter what happens in the future... You must think of Mommy first..."

Ch. 07

'The life form called "Mom" is too frightening...'

'In every single way...'

I looked at the two confronting each other armed with swords. The two of them were dressed in armour and wore helmets, but their eyes were savage as if they genuinely wanted to chop the person in front of them in half.

'Perhaps it was because Elizabeth had to go hunting soon so she wanted to get an early warm-up. Vyvyan on the other hand was fuming with rage. I initially thought Vyvyan got grumpy, because she hadn't seen me in a long time. I never thought she was truly furious.'

"I slept holding my son, so what are you angry about?"

"He's my son." Vyvyan looked at Elizabeth coldly, swung her sword and said, "What did you do with my son?! What lewd things did you do? Only I can do those things. You don't think that my son would be happy with you doing those things as well, do you?! My son is only happy with it when I do it."

'No, truthfully, I wouldn't really be happy if you did it, either, because you're my mom! You're my mom! How could I be happy about my mom bathing me?!'

"Let me have a think. Ah, I hugged him while bathing and slept with him in my embrace. Oh, also, my son's lips are very soft."

Elizabeth touched her lips as if she was reminiscing the moment as she spoke to Vyvyan with a bragging expression.

I noticed Vyvyan's hand that was holding her sword, tremble. Vyvyan's eyes had already turned red...

'I feel that Elizabeth is in serious danger right now...'

Vyvyan was akin to an agitated lion. She raged, "Yeah?! You dare to do that sort of stuff to my son? Elizabeth, don't go thinking that you can do whatever you like to my son, just because I haven't been warning you recently! Elizabeth, come to your senses. Only I can do those sorts of things to my son!"

“Really now? Don’t forget that I’m his real mother! I’m his only mother! How much longer are you going to fool yourself? What’s wrong with bathing my son and kissing him when I’m his mother?! I gave him his entire body! Everything of his belongs to me!” Elizabeth pulled her mask off and then continued, “You’re aggravated now, right? Now you’ll show your true skills. Though your sword skills are whatever, I don’t have anyone else around me worth my time. I’m going to be going hunting s(oon)-...”

Bang!!!

Vyvyan swung her sword without waiting for Elizabeth to finish. Their swords clashed with a loud bang, snapping the swords in two. Vyvyan tossed the sword handle in her hand away, then coldly glared at Elizabeth and said, “Cut the drivel. You think I’m playing with you? You manipulated my son. What else do you want to say? Wooden swords are too brittle. When did we ever fight with these things? Bring real swords here.”

Elizabeth looked at the wooden sword in her hand that had been snapped. She chuckled and replied, “All right; sure. It wasn’t nice of you to sneak attack me, but you’ve triggered my fighting spirit. I haven’t wanted to pummel someone in a long time. Ever since my son returned to my side, I’ve become reluctant to kill, but since you want to see blood so much, I guess you won’t complain no matter how much I cut you up.”

The two Valkyries by Elizabeth’s side removed their swords. Elizabeth grabbed them and tossed one to Vyvyan. Vyvyan caught it then pushed me aside. She touched my face and softly told me, “It’s all right, my son. I’ll teach this woman a lesson and all will be well. Stand to one side. Don’t let yourself get hurt.”

“No magic, all right? Fight properly with the sword. If you use magic, I’ll use the Elven King’s sword to fight you.”

“Bring it.”

Vyvyan had no intention of saying any more to Elizabeth. She immediately took a swing at her. They struck so fast it was comparable to camera flashes. The sound of metal clashing with metal non-stop was similar to firecrackers. Their swords were reflected on their bodies, but neither managed to touch the other.

I suddenly thought of a problem.

‘Elizabeth is clearly just warming up, while Vyvyan is genuinely trying to hack her to death to vent! Elizabeth will stop, but Vyvyan won’t.’

‘How am I going to stop them?’

“Sorry, Onii-sama...”

‘I remember the plot went the exact same way last time...’

The two of them froze up then instantly threw their swords aside and hugged me at the same time. I staggered and then got caught in between four warm, generous and bouncy things, nearly causing me to pass out from suffocation. I felt the amazing bounciness of the two, as well as their individual scents, causing my brain to stop thinking for a moment...

“Son, it’s dangerous for you to barge in, like that. If Mommy can’t pull back in time and hurts you, what are we going to do...?”

“Son, Son, are you all right? Did you get hurt anywhere? If you did, Mommy will obliterate everyone nearby.”

The two of them caressed me in a panicked manner, checking to see if I got hurt anywhere. However, they’re both sword masters. As long as they don’t want to hurt me, they never will. I looked at them and said, “Moms...”

“You only have one mom!”

The two of them shouted at the same time. I froze up. I then smiled helplessly and said, “Your Majesty, Your Highness, can you two stop for a moment? Her Majesty must have something to say...”

“Yeah...?” Vyvyan hugged me. She looked at Elizabeth with a very vigilant gaze and went on, “You have something to say? Did you call me here to say something? If it’s nothing important, I’m going to resume talking to you about the matter with my son.”

Elizabeth chuckled and then replied, “I wanted to invite you to come participate in the hunting event.”

Vyvyan lingered for a moment then coldly replied, “I won’t partake in you humans’ events. Your events have nothing to do with us elves. Moreover, you

humans wouldn't be happy if I participated, would you?"

"I didn't invite you for your joy or ours, but for my son." Elizabeth looked at her indifferently as she explained, "As my son's adoptive mother, it is only right for you to make an appearance, which will also demonstrate what you mean to my son. It'll also circumvent people from attacking my son, due to his relation to elves."

Vyvyan narrowed her eyes. She looked at Elizabeth with distrust. Perhaps she was trying to read between the lines. A moment after, Vyvyan nodded, "I shall come, since you have said that. Nevertheless, I won't be showing you humans any respect."

"I don't care. Do as you please."

Elizabeth looked at Freya, who pushed me first, and asked, "Do you have business, Freya?"

With a document in her hand, Freya bowed and replied, "Yes. About the annual meeting's arrangements, there are some things you and His Majesty need to look over."

Elizabeth whipped her hand and said, "You don't need to get me to look over these sorts of things in the future. Just have my son look over them."

Freya looked at me with a complex expression. She nodded with a hint of anticipation and accomplishment...

Ch. 08

Freya looked at my red scarf and asked, “Onii-sama, are you not hot?”

I touched my red scarf, guiltily shook my head and replied, “No, I just came back from the hot desert, so I feel like the temperature here is a little cold...”

Freya nodded and responded, “Is that so...? Why do you need to wear a scarf indoors then? If you are cold, I will go and order someone to add firewood.”

“Don’t, don’t, don’t. I’m comfortable like this. Really!”

I quickly stopped Freya.

‘Please do not make me take my scarf off. If I take it off, Vyvyan’s hickey will be revealed. The same goes for my chest. I still have the bite wound she gave me. How am I going to explain these marks to Nier tonight if she sees them...?’

‘I need to prepare my stuff to go see Lucia with Vyvyan. Then I’ll be able to tell Lucia that Nier made the marks. Then when I get back and Nier sees the marks, I can say Lucia left the marks. Damn, I’m a genius to be able to come up with a solution in such a short time frame. Mm, I can also travel between the two places smoothly with Vyvyan.’

“Though I do not know why you are in such a rush, I feel that it would be better if you informed the Princess first... After all, heading off in such a rush would worry her... Furthermore, the Princess has been missing you all this time. If you suddenly go again...”

I nodded then scrubbed Freya’s head. “I’m sorry to Nier, but I already told Mom and have to leave now. I can’t delay it any longer. Could I trouble you to tell Nier?”

Freya closed her eyes a little, enjoying it similarly to a kitten and then replied, “You still have lots of work to do here. There is a very important job coming up for you very soon, after all; therefore, I hope that you can come back soon.”

‘I don’t want to see Nier at the moment for sure! If she takes my scarf off, I’ll be exposed! According to what Vyvyan said, this is a mark women leave behind. As the Princess, Nier would consider it taboo. We might even have a daughter-

in-law versus mother-in-law war on her hands.'

'Actually, I don't think so. Nier has never viewed Vyvyan as a family member. Her only mother-in-law to her is Elizabeth. The same applies for Lucia. I guess they could be considered courteous and respectful, since they don't usually interact with their other mother-in-law.'

"I'll be as quick as I can. Come to think of it, I spend more time away from Lucia."

I chuckled and then turned around and lingered.

'Why hasn't my cape been draped on yet? Luna should've draped my cape on my shoulders by now.'

I waited for a few seconds until Freya looked at me with a weird gaze. That's when I realised that Luna wasn't here anymore.

I smirked then picked up my cape and wore it on. I sighed and said, "I'm honestly not used to Luna not being here. I feel that I can't find anything... I sincerely hope she can be back soon..."

Freya looked at me as she said, "Miss Luna has only been gone for an afternoon and you have not gotten used to it. If you do not feel used to it, find another personal servant... Are you seriously not going to have someone look after you, just because of a single personal servant? While you can take care of yourself, you have to know that no single individual can handle all of your daily life necessities, alone. Luna is not a born-maid. Her standard as a maid is just average, inferior to Castell as a matter of fact."

"Nah, don't worry about it. Luna is just on break. It's not as if I can't take care of myself, and she'll be back soon. I'm not worried. I promised Luna that she would be my one and only personal servant forever. I won't switch her for someone else, even if they're more experienced and competent. Her Majesty follows the same principle. Would she just abandon Castell, because there's someone who could do a better job of looking after her?" I stroked her head then went on, "I'm leaving then. Freya, I'll have to bother you for a while longer. I'll have to rely on you with regards to the annual meeting."

Freya proudly puffed her chest out and replied, "That will not be a problem,

Onii-sama. I will definitely do my best. After all, it is not just your future, but also Her Majesty's wish."

'I'm very assured by Freya's work standard and ethic. She'll be able to handle it. Freya could smoothly resolve it and then deal with each and every bit related to it even if it was a more complex problem. I trust her abilities. If you ask me what my true strength is, then Freya would be my strongest strength.'

I left the room and arrived at Mommy Vyvyan's room. Vyvyan already had her magic circle ready. I've never seen Vyvyan draw a magic circle before. Vyvyan seemed to be reluctant to use the mana within her. She, instead, used the mana inside the elves' spring water. I looked at Vyvyan but couldn't sense anything odd with her body.

'She also sucked a large volume of mana from me, so why was she reluctant to use her mana?'

I clearly noticed that Vyvyan didn't use her mana, either, when she was brimming with murderous intent toward Elizabeth during their fight, as well. In fact, she focused more on defence than attack. Vyvyan rarely uses a sword, as she doesn't like the feeling of cutting into people. However, her skills with a sword aren't poor. Lorana said it herself. Her two best students were Elizabeth and Vyvyan. It's impossible for a fight between them to be lop-sided.

'Is Vyvyan not well?'

I looked at Vyvyan. I felt slightly concerned. I hesitated for a moment then asked, "Mom, have you not been well recently?"

Vyvyan paused to look at me then smiled as she said, "No. Mommy is well as always. Are you worried about something, son?"

I looked at Vyvyan and asked, "Uhm. I'm worried about your health... Recently... you seem to be very concerned about your control over your mana... Have you not been well recently or have you exhausted your mana inside your body?"

Vyvyan is a demi-god so she should have infinite mana inside her. But she's been so cautious recently. There seems to be some sort of problem.

Vyvyan hesitated for a moment then touched her lower abdomen. I didn't

know what it meant... Instead, I followed up by asking a question.

Vyvyan hesitated for a moment then looked at me and replied, “I guess you could say that. Mommy feels as though Mommy hasn’t had enough mana to use recently... Mommy thinks it has to do with Mommy’s body, but the issue won’t persist for long. It should return to normal in a few months’ time. Mommy’s usual living activities aren’t affected. It’s just that Mommy feels a little weak when using powerful spells.”

“Sorry, Mom... You’re not in good health, yet I... yet I’m asking you to teleport me. If you don’t feel well... let’s ride there.”

I looked at mom apologetically.

‘Mom is not well and yet I’m still asking her to expend mana. I’m being too inconsiderate.’

Vyvyan revealed a consoled smile then waved her hand, and the magic circle began to rotate, creating a blue ray of light. Vyvyan looked at me with a smile and said, “Mommy will be fine. Plus, if we ride horses, we won’t make it back in time. Son, if you care about Mommy... then let Mommy refill Mommy’s mana before heading back...”

Ch. 09

“Lucia! Lucia!”

I tightly hugged Lucia. She, too, wrapped her arms around me with all her might and gently quivered as she leaned on me. She placed her head lightly on my neck where my wound was and gently rubbed it. In a hoarse voice she said, “Your Highness... I... I missed you so much... I missed you so much... Your Highness... you’re hurt... you’re hurt... I was so worried... I... I was so scared I wouldn’t see you again.”

“I’ll be fine, Lucia, I’ll be fine. I promised to always be your side, so I’ll be fine.” I tightly hugged her and then gently pushed her away to look at her eyes before kissing her lips. Lucia kissed me back and meekly leaned on my body. The two of us indulged in each other for a while. We licked each other’s insides, trying to fill each other up with each other’s scent.

‘I love Lucia. I always have. However, Lucia must stay in the elven land during her pregnancy, while I still have business in humanity’s lands; therefore, I won’t be able to return here anytime soon. Back before all these incidents happened, Lucia and I were always together. I felt that time was really slow at the time, but thinking back on it now, it was so nice and blissful to live in those moments full of sunlight. When did Lucia and I begin to always be separated?’

‘Lucia and I fell in love through trials and tribulations, but our path afterwards is also filled with challenges. The number of times we get to see each other continue to become fewer and fewer, yet we love each other. Additionally, our love has not disappeared because of time, or the physical distance between us.’

Lucia looked a little tired. Lucia said that she felt sleepier and sleepier each passing day. I carried her to the bed. I tightly held her hand and next to her ear, softly recounted my story in the desert. Lucia listened in closely to my story while looking at me. I held her small hand. I watched her eyes slowly shut and then gently covered her with her blanket.

Lucia wore a particularly reassured look this time. I was a little reluctant to let go of Lucia’s hand. I then walked out of the room and saw mom looking out the

window.

“Mom?”

I called out to Vyvyan and she jolted. She then turned her head to look at me and wiped the corner of her eyes. She softly laughed and asked, “What’s wrong, Son?”

I walked up to her. I looked at her and asked with concern, “Mom, why are you crying?”

“I’m crying?” Mom touched her face. She then grabbed my hand and placed it gently on her chest. I could feel her strong and steady palpitations. She looked at me and explained, “Because mommy is jealous. Mommy is jealous at how blissful Lucia is... After mommy got married to Onii-sama, we were never that blissful. Mommy felt most blissful when mommy held you. Maybe Onii-sama never loved me.”

I looked at mom’s somewhat lonely gaze, but didn’t know what to say.

‘I don’t have any impressions of my father. The one who always spoke of my father was Elizabeth. Elizabeth truly loved Inard. I never heard Vyvyan talk about Inard, though.’

‘She addressed him with the highest level of formality, referring to him as “Onii-sama”. She had never, in a yearning tone, called him “my husband”. It sounds as though Inard never loved Vyvyan either.’

‘That means Vyvyan was just a tool to give birth to me from Inard’s perspective. Vyvyan must’ve loved him, however. Otherwise, it would’ve been impossible for her to accept such a abnormal request.’

Vyvyan gently rested her head on my shoulder then softly elaborated, “So the only man Mommy truly loves is you... Son... Seeing Lucia so blissful makes Mommy feel... really jealous... Mommy feels very jealous of Lucia, who’s so blissful...”

“Mom...”

‘I didn’t know how to console Vyvyan. All I could do in these sorts of moments was give her a gentle hug. Vyvyan doesn’t have weird feelings for me, because

of that, right?’

Vyvyan cuddled me similarly to cuddling a little bird in my arms. She then looked at me. She shifted around on my chest and said, “Has mommy been a little strange lately...? It seems that Mommy is getting old... Mommy’s poor health makes Mommy feel Mommy is old now. I never thought that woman that’s always ordering people around would want to abdicate the throne... It’s been over a decade in the blink of an eye... Should Mommy abdicate the throne, too...?”

I shuddered.

‘Does Vyvyan have other children? She doesn’t. I’m her only child. If she wants to abdicate the throne.... Man, I can’t split myself! I’m only one man! I can’t manage two kingdoms at once, not to mention that it’s impossible to manage both elves and humans at the same time.’

“Son...”

“Mom, let me help you replenish your mana...” I looked at Mom’s face and sincerely said, “Though I don’t know what’s wrong with you, if it’s mana you lack, just take mine. My mana serves no purpose in the first place anyway. If I can help you feel a little better, I’m fine with it.”

Vyvyan looked back at my face. Her mouth twitched as though she was going to smile, then she softly said, “It’s all your fault Lucia and I have become like this...”

I froze for a moment before asking, “What?”

“No, nothing. It’s just that I haven’t seen you in so long that my body does indeed feel a little unwell. Since you’ve made the offer, don’t blame Mommy...”

The corner of Mom’s mouth crept up into an eerie smile. She then leaned into my neck and licked it. I felt her tongue tease every inch of my skin. A numbing sensation crept in. I felt her sharp teeth gently sink into me, and then my body heated up. I started to feel a little light-headed.

Vyvyan raised her head to lick me higher up on my neck. She then looked up at me and asked, “Son, do you still want to continue? If Mommy continues, you may lose an excessive amount of blood... If you want to continue, Mommy will

use a method you may not be able to accept...”

‘The dream I had seemed to appear again... as for what this method is, I think everyone already knows, right...? Sucking blood, saliva and one more that I can’t accept...’

“Can we... do it somewhere else?”

Ten minutes later, I gently ran my finger on my lips. I felt as if everything in my mouth had been sucked out. Mom wiped the corner of her mouth. I could see a couple of clear drops of liquid in the air. Vyvyan narrowed her eyes, then softly giggled, and said, “Thank you for the hospitality, Son... I have enough mana for sure now. I will be able to nurture an excellent...”

Ch. 10

At night, I hugged Nier, who was next to me, and apologised, "Sorry, Nier. I haven't been back for long, and I have to leave again."

'When I returned to humanity's lands, Freya informed me that I had to prepare to return to the Royal Capital to take part in the annual meeting's preparations. I originally wanted to stay with Nier for a little longer, but I won't be getting the chance. The time we had together was just a few embraces' long. We didn't even get to say much to each other.'

"It's all right... It's all right. Dear, I understand..." Nier gently snuggled up on my chest then took in a deep breath before continuing, "I understand that you're very busy. I told you, I want to be of help to you, not a burden to you. Dear, wherever it is you need to go, you just need to let me know. I understand. I can look after myself."

I gently brushed against her head and next to her ear apologised, "Sorry. Sorry..."

Nier gently stroked the hickey mark on my neck. She softly said, "She could stand being separated from you for so long so I can, too... My love for you won't change because of place or time... And I will love you even more after separation."

I stroked Nier's head and tenderly replied, "Look after yourself, Nier. I'm worried about you most right now. Of course, that includes Lucia..."

Nier gave my thigh underneath a hard pinch, so I obediently shut up and didn't mention Lucia in front of her. She looked at me then kissed me on my lips, and we were entangled together for a while. Nier then leaned away, and quietly pouted, "Dear, don't mention that woman in front of me... she even left a mark on your neck... I want to leave one, too!"

Before I could refuse her, Nier had bitten me right next to Vyvyan's mark. I had no tears to cry despite wanting to.

'Am I going to attend the annual meeting with three hickies? Am I going to let

all the vassal states see kiss marks on my neck? No way.'

'It appears that the scarf Mommy Elizabeth knitted me is very useful. I just never imagined that the main function of the scarf would be to hide the kiss marks on my neck...'

Nier and I tightly embraced.

'Due to her being pregnant, Nier didn't do that sort of stuff with me again. To me, that's a blessing. I am physically weak at the moment after all... Vyvyan had taken a lot of my mana. However, Vyvyan managed to send me back with just a wave of her hand this time.'

'My luggage for tomorrow had been prepared. I didn't bring my guard unit along, as they were still recuperating from their injuries. Those who weren't injured were also recuperating. It would be too much to ask them to sortie right now. Elizabeth, however, generously assigned me two Valkyrie teams to act as my bodyguards.'

'I feel like the Valkyries are a lot less hostile to me now. And with their sword instructor with me, the Valkyrie teams here weren't too hostile to me, but we're just maintaining a basic level of harmony. If Nier was here, I'm confident I could make this team obey me, since Nier holds a very high rank within the Valkyries squad.'

'Now, though, this team just needed to keep me safe.'

'Valkyries are definitely qualified bodyguards.'

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty, good morning!"

When I opened my eyes, I saw Luna standing before me, holding my clothes with a smile. I froze for a moment, and then let go of Nier, who was in my arms, and rubbed my eyes. I stared at Luna. She lingered for a moment before looking at me and asking, "Your Majesty, are you bothered by something, or have I got something on my face?"

"No... It's just... I never thought you'd be next to me..."

Luna revealed smile as it was a matter of course then responded, "What are you saying? I am your personal servant. It is a given that I would be by your

side. Your Majesty, you are not quite yet awake, are you? I must apologise, though, as you cannot continue sleeping. The Valkyrie squad has begun the day. You need to have breakfast and prepare to head out.”

“Ah... Wait... didn’t you go for a vacation?”

I looked at Luna.

‘She shouldn’t be here right now. She should be off on vacation. Though she did say she’d be back today, I never thought she’d be back now. Logically speaking, she should’ve been back yesterday afternoon, but I happened to be on the elven side at the time.’

“I just took a bath at the hot spring outside the city. It was really comfortable.” Luna smiled, and then touched her cheeks as if she brought the moisture and warmth from the spring out. She then tilted her head with a smile and went on, “I need to go with you to the Royal Capital this time once again. I am your only personal servant, after all. Plus, you would be distressed without me, right?”

I sat up. Luna grabbed a towel from a basin by the side to wipe my body. I looked at Nier, who was sound asleep, and gave her a light kiss on her cheek before pulling the blanket over her. I then picked up my shirt and wore it on. Luna added the finishing touch by draping my cape over my shoulders and adjusting it. She then gave me a few gentle pats on my shoulder and said, “Let us go, Your Majesty. I am the only one coming along again this time.”

I grinned and responded, “It won’t be just us. My moms will also be coming. But you’re right. You’re the only one around me that’s coming. I never thought that we could only get the opportunity in the desert.”

“I guess we could call it fate, Your Majesty. It was fortunate that I did not leave the city. Could this be considered our connection? It appears that god wants for us to be together a while longer.”

Luna giggled then asked, “What is the trip for this time? Judging from Miss Freya’s tone, it sounds as though is something very important... Is it a good idea to not bring Miss Freya along for something so important?”

I nodded and then explained, “It can’t be helped. Freya isn’t my biological

sister, so she can't take part in this sort of event for the royal family. But Freya prepared information on all of the vassal states for me. Additionally, I have my moms, so it'll be fine."

"Uhm, okay then."

Luna has never questioned my arrangements. She nodded and then we left the room together. I looked at Nier, who was asleep, one last time and hesitated for a moment before shutting the door gently.

'Perhaps I'm not particularly sad, because this was now the second time we're separating.'

'Moreover, since Nier wanted to be of help to me, I won't make her angry with herself. There's still time in life. I don't need to mind separating once or twice like this. I'll stay by their sides all the time afterwards, growing old together and watching our children grow up.'

'But before that time comes, I need to work hard for my own dream, for our life in the future, and for the expectations my moms have. '

'Although I didn't complete the task in the desert perfectly last time, I'm certain I can leave a good impression with the vassal states this time. They might not think I can surpass her majesty, but I'll make it so that they willingly compliment me, saying "He's Her Majesty's child all right!"'

Ch. 11

I sat atop my steed. Freya stood next to me. She looked up at me and asked, "Onii-sama, are you not bringing me along this time, either?"

I nodded and replied, "Uhm, because Troy City still needs you. If even you leave, who will handle Troy City's matters? I do have others I can trust, but that doesn't mean that they can handle everything."

"That, you do not need to worry about. There is not really anything that needs to be worried about. Onii-sama, your task this time is very crucial. I think that you need to bring me. There is your response at the annual meeting to consider, as well. I can give you appropriate suggestions."

Freya looked at me while feeling impatient.

'It was the first time I'd seen Freya so impatient. Freya has always responded to my thoughts in a calm fashion. She always calmly resolved every flaw in every plan. Freya had never taken the initiative to give instructions; instead, she listened to my thoughts before providing me with a plan that would make me most comfortable. That's also why I trust her. This time, however, she did the opposite. It seems that she really doesn't have confidence to let me handle it alone.'

"Am I so unreliable to you?"

"No, you are not unreliable, but you deal with human relations immaturely. Although you have already improved a lot, you are squaring off against veterans of the battlefield this time. If you say something wrong, that could affect the entire empire's future. Moreover, this is the first time you are revealing yourself as the Crown Prince, so it is only natural that you be more prudent in your handling of it. Therefore, Onii-sama, please bring me along. As Troy City is located in the North, it will enter a stable period of development during spring, which means that the things I can do become fewer and fewer. I believe that I have every opportunity to go with you. Your most trusted Guard Unit is in the city, along with the Valkyries looking after the Princess, so you need not worry."

Freya earnestly analysed her reasons. I patiently listened to her until she

finished without cutting her off.

‘To be honest, I really want to bring Freya along, as well, since I can calmly deal with anything with her wits. Freya’s ability to resolve problems with her clever methods, and her ability to adapt on the fly can be of help to me.’

I nodded, “All right then. In that case, come on up. I’m not against you coming, but you must remember to do your best to help me.”

“I understand, Onii-sama. I said what I did precisely for that reason.” Freya nodded with excitement as if the dream she held onto for so long was finally approved.

‘I’ve never known why Freya was so passionate about this time’s annual meeting. She wasn’t excited when I went to the desert. She calmly sent me off as though I was going for tea.’

‘Why is she so passionate this time? Is it for my sake? Freya is helping me so passionately for me to be able to succeed the throne safe and sound. Nevertheless, my ascension would also be of great benefit to her, since she would need the help of an Emperor’s power to revive the glory of her household. Elizabeth isn’t willing to lend her a helping hand at the moment. If I look at it that way, Freya must give her all to make the most of this opportunity with the next Emperor before her.’

“Ah, Son, your squad is ready.”

While we were conversing, Elizabeth had come up behind us, and then called out to us. The Valkyries all saluted her when they saw her. Elizabeth casually waved her hand then looked up to me, sitting on my horse, and smiled. She said, “When you meet the various rulers for the first time this time, be sure to leave a good impression on them. Also, M(ommy)-, I will also go there personally, except I will be a little late, so have a good talk with them during that time.”

I nodded. I gave a small bow atop my horse and replied, “I understand, Your Majesty.”

I noticed the Valkyries behind the Empress angrily glare at me, as I didn’t dismount in Her Majesty’s presence, while she looked up at me. For an

Emperor, the only thing that could make an Emperor lift their chin to look up was the sky.

“Sorry, Son. You have just gotten back and yet you have to make another trip because of my wilfulness. Son, if you’re tired, just let the people around you know. Don’t let yourself get sick. I don’t want you to be so tired, but they aren’t always free.”

Mommy Elizabeth didn’t care about all the formalities. She walked straight up to me and affectionately patted my thigh before stepping back and apologetically saying, “Look after yourself, Son. After this hunting event, you can rest however you please. Actually, you’ll need a good break, because you might not have much time to rest later on.”

‘True that.’

‘Seeing the way mom had to sort out documents every day, there really won’t be any time for resting after becoming Emperor. Plus, as the brains of the entire empire, I must always be tense. Not everybody can be an Emperor. I might really have no time to rest in the future.’

‘But that’s the future.’

“I will, Your Majesty. I shall take my leave first, then. I will be awaiting your arrival at the Royal Capital.”

“Uhm, all right. I understand. Son, you must be careful. Look after yourself on the road. If you need anything, let the Valkyries know, no matter what it is, steal if required. The same goes for when you’re at the Royal Capital. Don’t exhaust yourself for the annual meeting. If you’re too tired, you don’t have to go see them. Leave it to me.”

Elizabeth took two steps back.

‘Her usual stern and domineering expression was replaced with an expression full of tenderness and concern right now. Her tone carried a prominent feeling of a mother. Even Elizabeth will show her true side when sending her child off. Even if I have her most trusted guards with me who are also elite bodyguards, she would still be concerned for my safety. Every mother imagines their child venturing into an apocalyptic world when they leave her arms, and go into the

outside world.'

I looked at Mom. With a smile, told her, "I know. I will look after myself and handle everything adequately. Your Majesty, you need not worry."

Mom nodded. She then took another two steps back feeling consoled and wiped the corner of her eyes. She nodded firmly and said, "Uhm! Uhm! I trust you, Son. I believe that you can successfully resolve these matters. Didn't we already confirm that before? You're an adult now. You're an adult now..."

'... What did you just base that judgement off?!'

'Just on what basis did you determine I was an adult?! What exactly did you see?! That incident doesn't prove that I'm an adult! Is your idea of my growth my physical growth?! Shouldn't my growth be my mental maturity and my proficiency in handling matters?!'

'Where is your gaze affixed on my body?!'

Ch. 12

'I've travelled the road back to the Royal Capital twice. This is now my third time.'

'The switch in seasons to spring wasn't distinguishable in the North, but the further and further South we went, the more and more prominent the change became. Black soil was now revealed in the fields on both sides of the roads. The ice had melted into clear water, and there'd occasionally be people who'd be stamping over and over in the soil. I don't know what they were doing, though. There were more people travelling on the road. I didn't hide my identity this time. I boastfully raised the flag of the royal family with the royal family emblem on it. Everybody who passed by had to salute us. It felt really nice.'

'This time, I felt rather at leisure, since it's just an annual meeting I'm attending. I won't be participating in the hunting event. This is, therefore, basically a vacation for me, except I'm a little unhappy that I couldn't bring my wife along. But then, my Princess already made an appearance at the wedding,

so she doesn't need to make an appearance at these sorts of gatherings between me and the vassal states.'

'Moreover, I'd feel more assured if my two pregnant wives stayed at home to look after themselves, instead.'

"Onii-sama, after we arrive, we need to provide a reception for the envoys first. This is the busiest time of the year in the Royal Capital. We will need to handle lots of matters, because the level of the relationships between each vassal state varies, in addition to them having different religious beliefs. If we do not handle our time together well, it is very likely to create harassment incidents in the Royal Capital. Hence, we must be very meticulous with where we arrange them and what they do."

I kept silent for a while before responding, "Do we have to handle that, too? Haven't those things already been arranged? I don't have any experience in dealing with their business. How am I supposed to know what habits they have or what their religious beliefs are? I'll be the one that suffers losses if I have to handle it."

"Did I not give you the information on them already?"

I scratched my head. I dryly chuckled and replied, "I didn't have time to look over it... I was planning to read through the information on the way there..., but it doesn't seem as though I'll get a chance now..."

"There is no such thing as 'doesn't seem as though I'll get a chance,' you just never made time. Onii-sama, as the main star of the meeting this time, you cannot be slipshod like this. While you have, indeed, just returned from the desert, you must prepare yourself to work hard. The work you will have to handle in the future will be more complex and tiring than the work you are dealing with now. You cannot be so slipshod."

I looked at Freya's stern face as she scolded me. Freya looked at my smile with a stern look and exclaimed, "Onii-sama, do not look at me with a nonchalant look as you say these things. The things I said are all things that you need to be mindful of!"

"I know, know." I stroked Freya's head as I said that then smiled and said, "But seeing you so worked up is cute."

“I am not worked up at all!”

“But you’re still very cute.”

“... Hmph!”

Freya blushed and snorted before looking away. Although she acted prideful, the corner of her mouth was actually curled up into a proud smile. A moment later, she looked at me again and said, “Although I was just cut off by you, I must remind you again that this is a very important matter for you, Onii-sama. You can start looking over it now, too... However, we will deal with the details when we meet them. You should be aware that they might deliberately do something to make things difficult for you.”

“Ah? They will?”

“Of course they will. It might not be out of ill-will, but everybody always tries to tease newcomers. Further, you would not dare to fire back at them if they teased you on this occasion. Nonetheless, out of consideration for the future, they will not pull any ill-willed jokes.”

Freya nodded and then informed me, “That is when you must show them something which you will need to think of. Did you not say you wanted to be a fair and just King? In that case, you must display your dominance and fairness. In the face of troublemakers, you just need to kill any insignificant individual and then console their master. You do not have to worry about killing someone, as Her Majesty relied on that to establish herself. Dabbing yourself with some killing intent would also prove that you, too, are Her Majesty’s child.”

“I honestly don’t want to be stained with that stuff...”

“That is rich. Did you not put a bullet in a noble’s child in a fit of anger for a beauty?” Freya then tilted her head and went on, “Wow, did you know that everyone was shocked by that at the time? You may not have realised it, but after that, everybody avoided Luna when they saw her. Oh, right, there is more. The friends of the young man you put a bullet in all... disappeared after... Hmm... It shouldn’t have to do with the Valkyries, It should have been...”

Luna, who was In front of Freya, gave a nod. Then with a smile, said, “I have His Majesty to thank for that time. Nobody harassed me after that.”

I hopelessly shut my eyes.

‘That was akin to a dream now that I think about it. I never thought I’d kill someone just like that, but I was truly broken at the time, and yet someone still dared to harass people around me, so naturally, I killed him.’

‘The same applies now, of course. If somebody dares to hurt the people around me, I’ll kill him, too. I’ve long become sick of killing. I sat on a mountain of corpses while in front of me was sand drowned in blood, as well as more and more corpses. I do, however, still try to refrain from killing senselessly. Even now, I would still criticise Nier, who was the first person who killed in front of me.’

‘Killing isn’t a result, but a process.’

“Those will be our first steps then. Onii-sama, you must find an opportunity to kill someone to warn others. The remaining question is who will be killed. Onii-sama, since you were played as the mantis stalked by the oriole lurking behind, do you want to kill them as revenge? Taking advantage of my absence to use such an underhanded method to obtain the map, how shameless. Had I been there, I would have killed them, too.”

‘Freya seemed to be full of resentment for me getting tricked. It could be because she felt she didn’t give me any good suggestion and was not content. But why does it feel that Freya feels as though I can’t succeed without her...? Perhaps that’s why she was so insistent and excited about coming this time.’

“We’ll be at the Royal Capital any moment now.”

We continued travelling for a while. At sunset, we could see the tallest place in the royal capital shine. Freya looked up in its direction. Seemingly longing for it, she said, “I will soon have to say that to you, will I not, Onii-sama...? This plaque will soon be yours, right, Onii-sama...?”

I replied, “There’s still a long way to go.”

“Uhm, there is.” Freya nodded then continued with a smile. “But as long as we continue to advance, we will be able to reach it, right? We are by your side after all.”

=====

Current time with the Karnashun group.

“Did you agree?” Nara looked at the envoy greeting her and the letter in his hand. She smiled and asked, “Was this your idea, or Her Majesty’s idea?”

“It is our idea.” The envoy then raised his head to look at Nara. He explained, “Almost half of the vassal states’ lords have agreed. I, now, would like to know your stance.”

“My stance?”

Nara looked at the envoy with a smile and walked up to him. He blankly looked at Nara who had a beautiful face. He didn’t know what to say. Nara raised her hand up and ripped the letter in front of him to pieces. She then rolled it up into a ball and stuffed it down his collar. She then gracefully spun around and left him with, “That is my answer. Please be on your way now. Tarak, see our guest out.”

“Yes, My Lord.”

Glossary

*The mantis reference is a reference to the quote, “The mantis stalks the cicada, but behind them lurks the oriole.” Troy was the mantis and the lord of Socina was the oriole.

Ch. 12.5

“Troy, is it a good idea for us to go so far?”

Lucia looked at her surroundings that covered up the sky and fearfully grabbed the corner of the young man’s clothes in front. Well, as opposed to calling him a “young man”, it would be more correct to refer to him as a boy. His young face still had the pink flush similar to that of an infant. He scanned his surroundings with his black eyes that contained the excitement and nervousness of exploration. He held the hand of the girl behind him and promised, “It’ll be fine. Nobody will come into the forest. Plus, there are no wild animals in this section, so there shouldn’t be any problems, Lucia! Even if there

is any danger, I'll be sure to protect you!"

Lucia looked at the very frail silhouette before her eyes and nodded with a serious attitude before tightly holding his hand.

He was just a young man that couldn't do anything, yet he carried himself as if the hero who'd save the world. She, herself, was very scared to enter this forest that had nothing. She was far away from the city, and he was the only one next to her. However, Lucia's fear went away thanks to the young boy.

Guess that could be considered a form of trust and reliance.

"What is the flower we're looking for...?"

"Ah, it's the type of flower that grows on treetops. I heard that it's extremely hard to find and very rare. I had to spend two silver coins to acquire this information from that dirty person. The flower is on the tallest tree in this forest!"

Troy resolutely thumped his chest, and then said, "Today is Mom's birthday, so of course I have to gift Mom the most beautiful flower in the world, because Mom is the most beautiful and noble person in the world. Only the world's most beautiful flower is worthy of her!"

Lucia nodded with adoration and responded, "Yeah, you're right. Her Highness really is amazing! But, Troy, what do you think I have to do to be as beautiful as Her Highness?"

"Ah..." Troy paused for a moment then frowned to think about it. He hesitated for a moment before replying, "I think you'll be as pretty as Mom after you grow up, Lucia..."

Lucia looked at Troy with determination and sternly replied, "No! I must be more beautiful than Her Highness. That way, you will choose to hug me when you see Her Highness and I. Otherwise, you'll only hug Her Highness."

Troy blushed a little. Despite being a kid, he still felt shy when speaking about dating with the opposite sex; or rather, he was blushing, because he was dating the opposite sex. However, the one the young boy was dating was his own mom.

The two of them walked through the forest of dead leaves, searching for the tallest tree in the forest. This forest was far away from the Imperial Capital. Vyvyan journeyed here for her birthday which is why her son is here. Vyvyan didn't inform anyone as to why she came here, but she did choose this place.

This isn't a great place by any means. There were no famous scenic spots. It was just a deep forest. This forest sat on the border of humanity's territory. It was far away from the elven territory. Few elves have been here, but Vyvyan chose to spend her birthday here.

For some reason, Troy didn't care, either. Troy was focused solely on figuring out how to get his most beloved mom a unique birthday present.

"Found it! It should be this tree!"

The two arrived at a rare flat area. There was a small creek that ran down from a huge tree. The bark of the huge tree was very odd. It wasn't the usual dark brown colour; instead, it was dark red akin to condensed blood. But a beautiful flower seemed to be visible at the treetop, yet at the same time not visible.

Troy excitedly ran over and looked at the huge tree that would take lots of people to actually surround its circumference. He hesitated for a moment then turned his head around to look at Lucia. Lucia lingered for a moment, and then looked up at the huge tree. She tore her skirt and then said, "All right, all right, I'll climb it..."

"Thank you so much, Lucia!"

Troy cheerfully grabbed hold of Lucia's hands tightly. Lucia looked at Troy and then said, "However, Troy, you have to repay me with a skirt... I really like this one..."

"Easy done! Easy done! I'll give you as many as you like."

Lucia nodded and then walked up to the tree. She then proceeded to grab onto the tree in a very trained fashion. She then proceeded to quickly climb up to the top of the tree comparably to a beetle. Troy watched Lucia pluck the flower on the treetop with excitement. Lucia then slid down the tree, looked at the flower and exclaimed, "What a beautiful flower."

“Yeah, I know. Thank you so much, Lucia!”

Troy excitedly grabbed the flower and carefully put it where his chest was. Lucia’s eyes looked at the flower with envy, but she didn’t say anything. She, instead, tied up her torn dress. Just as the two were about to head back, two silhouettes suddenly appeared from within the forest. The two, who appeared, gave Troy a heavy punch to the face as soon as they turned around.

“Troy!!! No! Stop!!”

His vision became blurry...

There seem to be something warm coursing down his face...

He could taste mud in his mouth...

He could seemingly hear Lucia’s cries in his hazy state, as well...

“Oh man, we’re going to strike it rich this time for real. Look at quality of this elf. She’s a high-quality elf. She must be the child of a noble elf. If we sell her, we’ll be able to make loads more than the few last orders for sure!”

“Yeah, man. She truly is quality. What about him...?”

His face was buried in the mud while a heavy shoe was rubbing his head with a painful burning sensation. It felt as though his nose was stuffed full with mud. The individual speaking overhead kicked his head with irritation and replied, “Screw him. Just leave him here. He’ll die soon anyway, won’t he? Let’s take the girl and leave now. Undue delay may bring trouble. Let’s get moving.”

“All right.”

“Troy!! No! Don’t! Let go of me! Let go of me!! Save me!! Save me!!!”

A bag got pulled over Lucia’s head. The two of them watched Lucia struggle, but then one of them tripped just as they were about to leave.

“Hmm?!”

He swiftly turned his head around. Something tugged at his ankle. The force of it was weak as a tree root. Nonetheless, there was without question something tugging on his ankle.

Troy struggled to raise his head. The blood on his forehead slowly coursed

down his face. He clenched his teeth stuffed with mud and tightly grabbed the man's leg. He exclaimed, "I will not... let you... take Lucia!"

"What's this punk talking about?! Get lost! We gave you a chance to live, but you don't want it?!"

He kicked Troy's head and Troy cried out in pain but he didn't let go. He kept his firm grip on him.

Inside his young eyes was fury. He roared at them, "I will not let you take away my Lucia! I won't let you!! Only I can take Lucia away! I won't let you!! Ever!"

"Smash h(im)-..."

He lost the ability to speak before he could finish what he had to say, because a sharp arrow had pierced his throat while the other guy... hmm... he vanished?

Put it this way. His blood pierced through his body and escaped from within, comparably to a hedgehog's spikes, causing him to explode and become a puddle of blood. So it's more appropriate to say that he vanished, would you agree?

"Son... son..."

Vyvyan caught Lucia who was falling down, frantically tossed her aside and then tightly hugged her child lying on the ground. She fearfully wiped away the mud on Troy's face and sobbed as she looked at him.

"Mom... Mom... Here..."

Vyvyan pulled Troy, who was crying, tightly into her embrace. The tip of her nose stung while her tears uncontrollably coursed down her face. Troy tightly hugged Vyvyan and wiped his tears while in her embrace. Vyvyan kissed his forehead and cheeks while tightly hugging him. In that moment, she had a strong urge to return him into her belly, absorb him... to keep him by her side forever...

For Vyvyan, her most precious gift was always by her side.

As long as her child was by her side, she had her most cherished and blissful gift...

=====

“Mom, let me personally wear it on for you.”

I gently pulled up Mom’s long black hair that was nice and smooth as water, despite her not adding any ornaments or looking after it. I gently pinned the hairpin on top for her. The hairpin was similar to a flower. It sat unspeakably beautifully in Elizabeth’s hair.

“Thank you... Thank you, son...”

Elizabeth hugged me gently. After we paid for it, we turned to leave. The owner of the store looked at their silhouettes from the rear and wiped his sweat off his forehead. He said to himself, “I can’t believe they’re mother and son... They look as if husband and wife...”

Glossary

*When Elizabeth said “Thank you... Thank you, son...” She actually used 皇儿 which is the empress, emperor would refer to their children. I left it out since it’d be strange to say “son... I mean, son...” But based on that, you could infer that this was when they snuck out of the palace toward the end of volume 4.

Ch. 13

‘The Royal Capital I’d been hearing of gave me an oddly familiar feeling. Perhaps the warm spring breeze that finally came brought life back, thereby returning the markets inside the city to the way they were when I first came. I don’t know when the most prosperous period is, but it’s not as bleak as it was in winter now.’

‘Warmth had finally arrived to the content, waking the city up again. Looking at the market in front of me gave me a feeling of familiarity and nostalgia, since Nier and I went through this area for many reasons in the past. This is where I bought Luna from, as well. What was relatively interesting was that when we went through the market and everybody saluted me, I saw the host look at Luna, who was next to me smiling, with shock.’

'My guess is he never expected Luna to attain such a high status. Even if she wasn't the Princess, to be able to walk side-by-side with the Prince was an extremely high honour.'

'At least it was certain that a single word from her could have him depart from this world.'

'Luna, however, had never brought up the topic of revenge with me so they don't need to worry. Luna kept a tight lid on her past.'

"Your Majesty!"

The palace with "Long Live Your Majesty" written on it had its doors open for me. I entered the palace and the Valkyries took my horse. I led Luna and Freya to the outer court. Honestly, the palace feels as though it's a foreign place without Elizabeth and Castell present. Despite the people in the most important posts being absent, the palace continued to maintain operations as per usual.

"Onii-sama, the earliest-to-arrive representative group might arrive in the next two days. The representative groups cannot stay in the palace. As such, we must organise where they will unload their stuff, and where they will reside. Although they will not be staying in the city for long, we still need to provide them with acceptable accommodation."

I nodded then asked, "Which vassal state representative groups will be arriving first? Is there anybody we're familiar with?"

Freya contemplated it, and then replied, "None that I am familiar with, but you should be familiar with them, right, Onii-sama...? If you and Nara Sobros Bufena got along well in the desert, she could be considered someone you are familiar with I guess. There is also the lord of Socina, Karana Dominique Von Testersmill. I would say we are both very familiar with her. We have not met her yet, but she has frustrated us for a long time."

I chuckled.

'Karana and Nara share the common trait of being ambitious lords of their cities. I feel that this world is really strange. By that I mean that all of the strong individuals are women. There's Vyvyan and Elizabeth. And then there's Karana and Nara.'

‘The two with big ambitions both made the most correct choice. And that is to be the first to arrive as a means of displaying their loyalty. Additionally, being the earliest to arrive meant that they could spend more time with the Empress, thereby allowing them to speak to her the most. In other words, they might be able to obtain something for their city.’

Freya looked at me with her head tilted. She snickered and said, “I assume that you must have gotten ideas for Nara Sobros Bufena, Onii-sama. Wait, sorry, Onii-sama, that is not the type of person you are. It would be more prudent to say that you and Nara Sobros Bufena lit the flames for a romantic story in the desert, right? She might even be one of the female lords you have conquered. After all, you are akin to a river of love, making love flow wherever you go.”

“Is that how you see me?”

I looked at her feeling hopeless.

‘Maybe something really could happen between us, except... I think I might be buried in the desert right now if I couldn’t control myself that night. Moreover, my negotiations with Nara would’ve crumbled. No, no, no, I’m not regretting it. It’s just that... how shall I put it? Strange things happen whenever I’m with these women... Is that part and parcel of being popular with the ladies?’

‘Who knows, Troy’s face might be considered handsome thanks to his elven nature and the genes he inherited from his two moms...’

‘That guess of mine was later confirmed... When I asked all the girls around me what their first impression was, their first impression of Troy’s face was “he looks good”. But there were two exceptions. One was Nier, who had no interest in men, and two, was Lucia who grew up with me.’

‘But they’re both my wives.’

I looked at Freya and proudly responded, “There is absolutely nothing between Nara and I. You would be better off saying I helped her with her marriage... I have to go and be her marriage witness when I have time, you know?”

Freya then looked at me with suspicion and asked, “Is that so? Based on the

information I have, Nara Sobros Bufena is a very pretty woman. How surprising for you to not seduce her. But it makes things easier since you two are acquainted. Do you remember what taboos or diet restrictions she has?”

“... I don't really know there. I'd say normal food and drinks consumed in the desert should suffice, right?”

“Really...? It will be easy to look after her then... However, you should go and see them after the two of them arrive. You should see every lord once and at set times. Do not have private conversations with them. You must speak with your doors open and have others present. Oh, right, leave that to Miss Luna.”

“Me?” Luna paused. She looked at Freya blankly and stuttered, “I... Do not... I... I do not have any idea what to do...”

“You do not need to do anything. You just need to sit next to Onii-sama. Of course, I will be coming along. The thing is that I cannot reveal myself as Onii-sama's strategist. However, if you are also present, then we need not worry even if somebody tries to pry information out of us, as Onii-sama would not bring along his personal servant if he was going to discuss some agreement with a lord. If he is taking his personal servant along, that means that their conversation is not about anything important, but merely a simple conversation.”

‘I understand what Freya means now. Freya intends to make my schedule apparent to prevent other lords from suspecting that I favour particular ones just as Castell described, a balance. I won't say any more to one person than the other which means that if they want to ingratiate themselves with me, then come have at it.’

“In short, the situation this time can be considered complex, but not difficult I guess. As long as you do not spark any flames causing other female lords to fall head over heels for you, then we should be fine.”

‘Just how does Freya see me...?’

I smiled helplessly and asked, “Of course I won't... But about how many people will be coming?”

“Sixteen lords. About sixteen *female lords*.”

“Freya, could you stop emphasising ‘female lord’?”

“Did you want me to emphasise ‘male lord’ then?!”

“... Freya, are you in a bad mood today...?”

Freya poked her tongue at me. She mischievously giggled then with a cheerful smile, said, “I shall stop with the jokes. Onii-sama, it is just as I said. Please meet each of them properly. Do not be biased and do not neglect anyone. All of them have their own agenda. What you must do is balance out their agendas.”

Ch. 14

‘The outer court was kept as always. It appears that my outer court remains the same even in my absence.’

‘Living in the outer court actually makes me feel that I’m a guest, a stranger now. My guess is that it’s due to me having gotten used to living in my own palace. Additionally, this is Mom’s palace. It’s Mom’s territory, not mine. Perhaps that’s why it feels foreign and I’m struggling to adapt.’

‘It seems that I’ve lived as a master for too long.;

‘Nara is arriving today so I’ve prepared to provide her with a reception. As the Prince, I don’t need to welcome her outside of the city. However, I need to at least meet her and her group in the guest hall.’

‘Truth be told, given our relationship, I wouldn’t have a problem with welcoming her at the entrance.’

‘The only thing is that I would have failed the requirement Freya gave me, and that is to ensure I maintain a balance.’

‘Hence, the three of us sat in the guest-room and waited for Nara. Luna had made tea. Wait. We say boiled tea here. I wonder if Nara, who always drinks strong alcoholic beverages, will be able to drink tea. Freya sat behind me with her eyes shut as she awaited their arrival. Perhaps she was listening for the sound of the horse carriage.’

'You know, the vassal states do suffer a fair bit. They have to send tributes at the end of every year. Not long after is Her Majesty's birthday, so they need to send another bunch of gifts. And now they have to send more gifts once again. Hmm, I actually think the people in charge of the national treasury are the most pitiable. Her Majesty can't store any more in her inner court, and there's more stored at my outer court.'

Sounds suddenly came from outside. The sound of a heavy horse carriage's wheels rolling on the road came in. Freya stood up and looked out the window. You can see a corner on the other side of the flower garden outside of the window. She chuckled and said, "It appears that the group from the desert have arrived. I never thought Socina's group would be late."

"I assume it's because their lord has other business. They do still need to handle their own affairs, after all." I chuckled. I am aware of what the lord of Socina needs to settle. She was after the mineral to consolidate her rule inside her city, after all; consequently, she must be trying to sort out the internal political affairs there. That must be why they're slightly late. I believe that her problems will be solved once she arrives, and I'll be able to head to Socina without concern.

I sat up straight. A moment later, footsteps from outside approached, accompanied by Nara's hearty laughter and Tarak's somewhat stunned voice. It seemed that the young man from the desert is very surprised by this palace. Nara's palace can't hold a candle to the Royal Palace after all.

"Ah, Your Majesty!" I heard Nara's voice from behind. I stopped up and turned around to see her smile. I greeted her, "Long-time no see, Nara. The journey must have been rough."

Nara giggled softly then replied, "It was all right. I would say the trip has been an eye-opener for me. Or should I say, I have found how Karnashun look in the future?"

I laughed heartily.

'Nara sure is ambitious as I thought. She wants her city to flourish as the Royal Capital is in the centre of the southern plains. While one may feel threatened by that, I, personally, don't feel that way.'

'I'm not Elizabeth after all, and Nara is also my friend.'

"Your Majesty!"

Tarak sincerely saluted me as per usual. I tapped him on his shoulder and said, "You don't need to be so serious. Tarak, while we might not be able to be so friendly later, we're the only ones around right now, so you don't need to be so serious. We aren't just Prince and his bodyguard after all. We're good friends, too. Moreover, I'm waiting for your invitation to act as the witness for your marriage."

"That... uhh... We... we... it is still a long way away...."

Tarak instantly went red in the face and shyly stuttered. Nara, on the other hand, was very calm. She looked at me. With a grin, she asked, "Probably around summer this year. We still need to prepare for our wedding for some time I think. Did you not prepare for half a year for yours, Your Majesty?"

I chuckled and replied, "No. Nier and I got married in two months. With Lucia, it was about three months. We originally needed lots of time for planning, but in the end, we just hurried and got married."

Nara froze for a moment. She then smiled and said, "We might as well get married next month, then. If you only prepared for three months and we prepared for six months, would we not be stepping out of line?"

"I don't care, honestly. Plus, I had reasons for getting married so early, reasons I'm not too willing to mention... Of course, your marriage will be the first marriage I had a hand in arranging; therefore, you need to prepare well for it. Ah... I get it now. You're in a bit of a rush, aren't you Nara?"

Nara was the one who went red in the face this time. She shyly glanced at Tarak and went silent. I chuckled and said, "Stay in the palace for tonight. That's a great honour to have, you know? You won't be able to stay in the palace once more people arrive."

"Really? Thank you very much for giving me the honour then, Your Majesty. I am very honoured. I am very honoured, not to mention that you are the one to provide us with a reception this time, Your Majesty. I want to know if you are receiving us as a friend or as His Majesty."

Nara sat to the side. She picked up a cup of tea and drank it as she spoke. But then she looked at the cup of tea in front of her and froze. It would seem that this stuff doesn't suit her palate. However, her eyes were full of vigilance and sensitivity. She appeared to have already discovered the purpose of me being here.

I tilted my head and with a smile, asked, "What do you think, Nara? Which identity would you be happier with?"

Nara tilted her head the same way and with a smile, asked me back, "Your Majesty, which response would you prefer?"

"You tell me first."

"I do not think that I would be particularly happy with either. Instead, I would be happy when you are both His Majesty and my friend."

I froze for a moment and then laughed aloud.

'It seems Nara is one whose eyes are bigger than her stomach. In her opinion, knowing a Prince isn't important. Not even being his friend was very important. What made her happiest was that her friend was the Prince who was soon to succeed the throne.'

'That would be the equivalent of being connected to Empress Elizabeth. Meaning she wants to be in a favourable position among all the vassal states, or even half of the continent.'

'That must be Nara's ambition.'

Nara smiled then stood up. She looked at her thin clothes and said, "By the looks of it, I need a new set of clothes here, as people look at me with strange gazes when I wear this. I shall not take up any more of your time, Your Majesty. Also, it would be better if you could serve me strong wine next time. But it is fine if you do not have any. I have prepared lots of wine from the desert for you."

"Yeah? That does bring back memories..."

I smiled.

'I don't know when it started. Mom particularly likes strong wine, so it became

one of the treasures I always wanted. I wonder what my trip to the desert gave me. A wine addiction, perhaps?’

Ch. 15

Castell looked at Elizabeth and requested, “Your Majesty, we should prepare to return to the Royal Capital, as well now. Please begin packing your stuff.”

Elizabeth held up her cup of tea and looked to the south with longing. She let out a long sigh then chuckled and remarked, “How nostalgic. I haven’t been back in so long. Coming here has been the same as having a long vacation. Now that I need to return all of a sudden, I am somewhat reluctant.”

Castell looked at her with a serious look. He responded, “Your Majesty, national affairs are important.”

“I know, I know. But isn’t my vacation coming soon? Uhm, once I return this time and let everyone see my most beloved son, I just need to work for a few more years before I can take care of my son in peace. Seeing Nier truly gives me an odd feeling of intimacy.”

Castell smiled helplessly to himself, since he knew that Alice, who took a big hit a few days ago, might not have calmed down yet, because of this attitude of Her Majesty. This time, Her Majesty wasn’t going to hunt to relax and to entertain herself before focusing on work for another year. She was planning of going to playfully hunt, and then abdicate the throne to look after her son. But perhaps that is why Her Majesty has been really relaxed and happy recently.

It had been a long time since he saw Her Majesty’s relaxed and cheerful smile. Actually, he had not seen it after he turned sixteen. Perhaps Her Majesty didn’t realise how beautiful her smile was.

“However Castell, there’s still one thing I need to clear up.” Elizabeth looked at Castell. She placed her cup of tea down and asked in a serious tone, “How did you deal with the matter last time?”

“I am already investigating it. The merchant really did not recognise His

Majesty. His Majesty did not have anything on him to show his identity at the time. He did not have an emblem or a flag. That is why he did not recognise him. I have scolded him for that...”

“That’s not what it’s about.”

Elizabeth cut off Castell with annoyance. She frowned without looking away from him and spoke in a reprimanding tone, “Are you still trying to hide it from me, Castell? You didn’t tell me about it? That horse carriage was transporting firearms, as well as metal for manufacturing firearms. What are you planning hiding that from me? I trusted you, and yet you dared to pull this under my watch? What has stolen your loyalty?”

“I dare not! Please do not suspect me, Your Majesty! I have never thought about doing anything that could harm you! You must trust me! From the moment you saved me, I decided I would give up everything for you! So I beg you, Your Majesty, please do not question my loyalty!”

Castell quickly dropped to his knees and looked up to speak in a shaky voice. He looked at Her Majesty as though he was going to cry. His body quaked with fear and despair. Castell was right. He wasn’t afraid of death, as he had gone through scarier things; however, he was afraid Her Majesty wouldn’t trust him anymore. He was afraid that his goddess would leave him. He considered Her Majesty to be the only source of warmth in this cold dark world. Her Majesty gave him a chance at life and the motivation to continue living.

He lived for Her Majesty. If she suspected him, then what meaning would there be left for him to live? Wouldn’t he be the same as the toy the nobles with twisted fetishes toyed with as he was back then? He became her favoured vassal, because of her. Should he lose credibility, wouldn’t he be the same as Luna?

Elizabeth watched him quake. She sighed, and then softened her tone, “So what exactly happened then? If you’ve scolded them, tell me what exactly happened. If you needed money, I’d reward you with some money. Why did you have to resort to that sort of method?”

“I... I...”

Castell looked up at Elizabeth’s black eyes and his lips intensely trembled. His

mind was blank as if it had been blasted empty. He wanted to say it. He desperately wanted to speak, but he couldn't. He respected Her Majesty, and his worship for her is unwavering; but nonetheless, he had another thought on his mind.

If he spoke up about it, Alice would be done for.

He knew that the Empress was Alice's everything. Alice and he have been colleagues for over a decade. He's on great terms with her. Moreover, if he reported it, who would Her Majesty put in charge of the Valkyries? While the Valkyries are absolutely loyal, there were none who were as loyal as Alice.

Even Nier left the Valkyries for His Majesty, so who else could be trusted?

"Forget it."

Elizabeth didn't wait for his response. Instead, she interjected with annoyance. She continued, "Go to the back and grab some money in a bit then. Just let me know if you need money. I'll put the matter aside for now, but I hope that I won't see those things before me."

"Yes..."

Castell let out a breath of relief. Since she didn't get to the bottom of it, it proved that the Empress still trusted him. His greatest treasure had not yet disappeared...

"But you won't need to return with me this time." The Empress stood up and walked over to the edge of the bed to sit down. She looked back at Castell with a hint of disappointment and criticism. She quietly said, "You stay here this time. You don't need to come with me. Just Alice will do. You stay here and take care of Troy City properly."

"Wh-..."

Castell looked at the Empress blankly. His legs which had just regained a bit of strength were glued to the ground again. His sight became hazy. He didn't even know what to say next and even suspected what he just heard.

"I said you don't need to return." The Empress slowly undressed. While looking at Castell, she indifferently said, "Just stay here. Alice and I will return."

There's no point in you coming along this time. I don't need anyone else to look after me, either. Just stay here to look after your goods and this city."

"B-But, Your Majesty..."

"You heard what I said, Castell."

The Empress picked up her sleepwear from the side to wear on then lay down her bed and rolled over. With her back facing Castell she coldly said, "Castell, since you heard what I said, don't ask again. Castell, just as you punished that merchant, I can't let you off scot-free, either. I'll let you stay here to reflect on yourself. You can come back once the hunting event ends."

"Your..."

"You can leave now. I'm sleeping now."

Castell knelt on the ground feeling dumbstruck while staring at Elizabeth's back. His heart ached as though a tsunami was tearing him up inside. He wanted to confess everything. He didn't want anything else. All he wanted was to stay at Her Majesty's side. All he had to do was tell her. But he couldn't make a sound as if his voice had died from despair.

"Valkyries, take Castell out."

The Empress ordered him to leave without asking him why he was still there. The Valkyries pushed the door open and politely hooked their arms under Castell's to drag him out of Her Majesty's room.

'How long has it been?'

'How long has it been since this last happened?'

'Her Majesty said my name so coldly... How long has it been since she mentioned my name in that tone...? The last time she spoke that way, my life almost ended...'

'Maybe my life is over now...'

Ch. 16

“All right, all right. You’ve finished unloading, right? Get moving then. Don’t block this place up! If you block this place up, the carts from outside can’t get in!”

“Those of you outside, make way! You’re blocking our patrol horse carriage!”

The Valkyries used their swords to brazenly scatter the crowd blocking up the entrance to the palace. The crowd and their horse carriages had completely blocked up the palace. Those aware would know that it’s due to the annual meeting, while those unaware would misunderstand that civilians have blocked the palace to prepare to launch a revolt here. The sharp blades of the Valkyries forcibly opened a path at the entrance. The coaches with various skin colours, varying clothes and languages rambled on and on as though they were trying to fill up the entire palace.

“Everyone, listen to me. Listen to me. We’re working in the palace to sort out your gifts right now. It’s pointless for you to all be here blocking the entrance up. Come one by one in order. Leave this place for now, and return to where you’re staying. Come one by one according to the arranged order, all right?”

I shouted with all my might from atop my horse. I wasn’t sure if they could understand me or not. What I knew was I was powerless even if they could understand me, because there didn’t seem to be many people who could hear me. The chaos that ensued in the crowd made me look as if I was a joke. The most useful tool was the Valkyries’ swords.

“Ptoo...”

Maybe he got sick of waiting. The coach spat on the ground and in the next instant, he had a blade go from one end of his neck to the other. He looked at the young girl before him with disbelief as blotches of blood gurgled up and he dropped to the ground. The Valkyrie in front of him whipped the blood off her blade, and then coldly kicked his corpse away and exclaimed, “The Royal Palace is the Empress’ resting place. How dare you disrespect it!!”

The crowd roared. Seeing their coach killed, his guards with him swiftly drew their swords, but the Valkyries were faster than them. The Valkyries had already swiftly killed a few before they could strike, and then the Valkyries in the vicinity all came over.

Having witnessed the event, the other guards also drew their swords. The Valkyries showed no mercy. They rushed up to them and cut down all those armed without asking a word.

“Stop!! Stop!”

The entire situation got out of hand. I couldn't control the Valkyries.

‘From their standpoint, weapons were not permitted to be carried around the vicinity of the Empress’s palace. Not only did this crowd bring weapons, they even drew their swords, which was a clear indication of treason. As Her Majesty’s loyal guards, they killed the guards of the vassal states without regards for the consequences.’

‘They didn’t obey my orders. The order they received was to keep me safe, not obey my orders. If Nier or Shusia was here then it would be easier to control them, but they aren’t here.’

The Valkyries didn't stop and ignored my shouting. They even waved their swords at my horse as I tried to enter the fray to force my horse to back off. Their overwhelming close-quarters combat prowess essentially turned it into a slaughter at the entrance of the palace.'

“Your Majesty it is dangerous here. Please do not approach.”

“Stop! Tell your people to stop!”

I looked at the Valkyrie, who appeared to be the leader here, while she was tugging my horse and shouted. She tilted her head, and then coldly responded, “We are killing traitorous scum who are desecrating the Royal Palace. There is no point in stopping. Your Majesty, you have no means of ordering us. We are only responsible for your safety. And right now, we must take responsibility for the safety of Her Majesty’s residence!”

I fired six shots into the air, but even that couldn't stop the rampaging Valkyries. The Valkyries had no intention of listening to my orders. I had no way of charging into them, so I could only hopelessly shout from behind. I watched the Valkyries cut down a person from a vassal state, turning the front of the palace into a sea of blood.

‘I can’t harm either side. If I obstruct the Valkyries, these people will slash me

to death without a second thought. There's no way anyone can reason with this crazy bunch. Without Mommy Elizabeth here, I can't do anything about this crowd.'

'I just hope that Freya can make it here soon... Wait, why am I passing the credit onto her...?'

"Retreat!!"

The slaughter lasted for an entire half an hour. By the time Freya arrived, corpses littered the ground with dead horses and overturned carriages piled up along with the corpses. Freya blankly watched the Valkyries sheath their swords and retreat with absolute shock. She looked at me with a dumbstruck look and asked, "Onii-sama... this group of Valkyries..."

"Sorry, I couldn't stop them..."

'I honestly didn't think that something like this would happen. I honestly didn't. Lots of groups from vassal states have come here the last few days since they all wanted to offer up their tributes. It was as though they had planned beforehand to come here all at once and block up the entrance to the Royal Palace with their horse carriages and groups. Large groups of people are not permitted to enter the palace all at once, so we had to restrict it to one carriage at a time. The other carriages, however, gathered together without any order, blocking not only the entrance to the palace but even this street.'

'It truly was as though all these groups came together at once all of a sudden. There were only one or two horse-carriages that arrived yesterday, but all of a sudden, all of them came around today. I was woken in the morning by the ruckus. I was shocked at first, since I thought there was a military revolt out for me.'

'I initially planned to clear up the congestion. I never thought such a serious genocide case would take place.'

'How am I going to explain this to the vassal states? All of their tributes and guard teams were killed right in front of my eyes at the entrance of the Royal Palace. This is comparable one big slap to their face. How am I going to leave a good impression on them after this? My plan might go down the drain before I even get to execute it at this rate.'

'Mom will be very disappointed, won't she...?'

'This crisis seriously came on too suddenly, so suddenly that I didn't even have time to react before it all happened. Moreover, I couldn't stop it from happening.'

"How did this happen...? The group of Valkyries... did not spare anyone, did they...?"

Freya quickly regained her composure. She didn't care about what the Valkyries were up to. She, instead, looked at the pile of corpses and pondered to herself. She then picked up a sword from the ground. She looked at me and asked, "Onii-sama, are you afraid of pain?"

"No..."

"Sorry then, Onii-sama."

Freya walked up to me. I dismounted and looked at her feeling bewildered. Freya took in a deep breath, and then aggressively cut my thigh and arms. I took in a breath of cold air. But it didn't end there. Freya flipped her grip on the sword and stabbed it into my horse's neck. My horse neighed as blood sprayed forth from its neck before it finally fell to the ground. It jolted a few times before it stopped moving.

Freya then sighed and explained, "All right. There are no witnesses. Now, we need to get people to spread news that this group of people waited for the chaos to breakout, and then tried to attack you. The Valkyries retaliated, and then decided to kill after determining that it was a deliberate and persistent attack. That will solve it. Onii-sama, you need to bandage your wounds, and pretend you got hurt by them... Then go to the places of all of the vassal states. We must act first to get the whip hand in this situation. We must be the ones who speak the truth, or else, we will be stuck in a passive role. Your Majesty, please bandage your wounds and then we will head out immediately."

"Ah... Oh... Understood."

Ch. 17

“Prince Bagrott, your people caused a riot at the entrance of the Royal Palace and even attacked His Majesty. Is there anything you want to say about this?”

As soon as Freya entered the room, she slammed the sword in her hand on the table, scaring the living daylights out of Royal Prince Bagrott. Stupefied, he looked at me with a shocked expression. My wound was bandaged in an exaggerated way. It was just a small cut, yet I was bandaged up as if I lost my arm. My face looked pale, which was actually thanks to makeup. I basically looked as though I just had a brush with death.

“Publicly insulting royalty’s power and harming His Majesty; Prince Bagrott, kill yourself right here to apologise! Otherwise, we’ll level your city in two days’ time! The Rosvenor Empire will not tolerate this sort of insult! You hurt the only Crown Prince at the entrance of the Royal Palace. Were you looking to bury all the people of your city as an apology?!”

Freya passed him the sword and roared at him with fury. I had no idea where she got it from for her act. I don’t think Royal Prince Bagrott who was merrily drinking his wine expected such a stern roar. He almost dropped his cup of wine from the startle he received.

“I... I... I do not know anything about this... This... this... my... my subordinates are disrespectful... but, it really had nothing to do with me! It had nothing to do with me!”

The chin of Royal Prince Bagrott trembled and he stuttered as he pleaded for mercy. He looked at the sword in front of him with terror. He desperately tried to pull away from us, putting as much distance between us as possible.

Freya coldly chuckled then said, “Shouldn’t you be the one taking responsibility for your subordinates fault as their leader? Are you claiming that you had nothing to do with what they did? Your subordinates did such a thing to a royal family member, and you’re pleading us for mercy?! Sure, use your own blood.”

Freya pushed the sword over to him. She pushed it up to his neck and coldly said, “Either you off yourself, or I’ll stab it through your throat, right now. You were prepared to die when you decided to do that, were you not?”

“Your Majesty!! Your Majesty! I beg you! Please!”

Royal Prince Bagrott had completely broken down.

‘I must acknowledge that Freya does indeed possess solid acting skills. Royal Prince Bagrott was completely cornered now. The looming danger of death made him go straight down on his knees to beg me for mercy. His nasal mucus and ears were running down his face.’

‘How hilarious for a man seemingly twice my age to be on his knees before me begging for mercy.’

“Prince Bagrott.”

I looked at the man in front of me and cleared my throat to avoid laughing out loud. We’re dealing with an urgent matter and it’s no time to be laughing, but I couldn’t help myself seeing him act so comical. When he heard me speak, it was as if he was gripping onto straws. He even hugged my leg and cried. Freya, however, swiftly kicked him off.

I watched him hold his stomach and groan. I sternly asked, “Prince Bagrott, I want to clear up something. Did you people plan this or was it an accident? Or were you perhaps joking with me but this ended up happening?”

“We would not dare to, Your Majesty...” Royal Prince Bagrott wiped his tears and nasal mucus. While still holding his stomach in pain, he wore a painful expression as he went on, “We only wanted to ingratiate ourselves with you. You are the next Crown Prince, so we would not dare to plot such a thing... This is not a joke, either. It is but just a misunderstanding. A misunderstanding! It is just a misunderstanding. The others do not know, either. We really did not plan this together!!”

Freya narrowed her eyes. It’s a habit of hers whenever she thinks. I didn’t know what she was thinking about, though.

‘Could she be thinking about how to continue planting the blame on this poor guy? I think it’s enough now. I’ve gotten the answer to what I wanted to know. Nobody lies when faced with death, especially when he doesn’t consider death some philosophical thing.’

“All right then. I just wanted to know that much. I’ll report this to Her Majesty. Your subordinates, who caused trouble, were killed by the Valkyries.

Your people started it, so you expected as much, right? If you're dissatisfied in any way, go and report it directly to Her Majesty."

"I dare not. I dare not... Those people deserved to die. I will not report anything. When I get back, I will eliminate their families, too, so please, please do not report this to Her Majesty. If you tell Her Majesty, I really will die! I really will die!"

"So you're suggesting that you're not afraid that His Majesty will kill you?! You came here and brought along guards to cause trouble?!" Freya kicked him in his head, and then raged, "You're afraid of Her Majesty, are you?! Are you not apologetic in the least about hurting His Majesty?!"

"No! No! No!! I am very sorry! I am very sorry! I am very sorry about my subordinates hurting you, Your Majesty. I am very sorry!"

"You'd do your best to remember this then. Let everyone know to stop. If this sort of thing happens again, you won't even have the privilege of killing yourself!"

Freya kicked him in his face. She then brushed her hands against each other as if she was patting off dust. She then pulled me out of the room. When we got outside, she let out a sigh of relief, "Phew. That felt great!"

She then revealed a smile, signalling she had gotten her revenge and explained, "Onii-sama, he toyed with me before, so consider this letting me vent."

"Ah, that's fine." I nodded and then added, "If you want to, I can even have him die. That's not a problem, either."

"No. If we do that, there will be nobody alive to spread this news around."

It appears that Freya stays level headed even in these situations. I grinned and then said, "That's all for this incident then, I guess. It's just a bloodbath, right? The conflict this time was a little too excessive..., but there doesn't seem to be any problems."

"No, Onii-sama." Freya tugged on the sleeve of my shirt and looked at me with absolute seriousness. She shook her head and explained, "This is not just a simple bloodbath, but a plot, and one that someone is hiding."

“A plot? You’re saying that he’s hiding some plot? He doesn’t appear to be the type who considers death the same as returning home, though.”

“No, Onii-sama. You must know that if he revealed plot, he would die an even worse death. If he did not, then you might not kill him. He was aware of that, even when we threatened him. He would be fine if he wrote it off as a conflict. However, if he admitted it was a premeditated plot, he was dead without question.”

I paused to think.

‘That sounds right. Indeed, I couldn’t kill him if this incident was kept under wraps. Put another way, he’s obviously dead if I want his life. If he mentions it, though, he’s dead, too. It didn’t matter what his choice was. He chose to hide it, and I did spare him.’

“How did you find out there was a plot behind the scenes?”

“Do you still remember what he said? He said, ‘The others do not know, either. We really did not plan this together’. Therein lies the problem. When did we ever say others were involved in the incident? Further, how did he know that there were others besides his own guards when there were no eyewitnesses, and how did he know that they were part of the same group present at the scene? That proves that they were all aware. They definitely planned this together. Acting first gives us the upper hand. However, Onii-sama, I believe that something more dangerous is in store. I am absolutely sure of it.”

Ch. 18

‘To be frank, I truly feel hopeless.’

‘I thought I’d get to just laze around as a Prince this time. Never did I expect there’d be another plot against me. I’m sick and tired of these plots at this point. Why can’t I have some free time? Even if I am the Prince, it can’t be that everyone comes after me, right?’

‘I’m just a kid... can you spare me...?’

I walked on the road feeling a little tired, not because of my wound but because I was honestly feeling worn out. The things that happened over and over have numbed my mind. I was truly disgusted by the current matter, yet I lacked the tension and nervousness I had when I first faced challenges.

'Am I getting old...?'

I silently walked on the road and looked at the surroundings on the streets feeling tired. Freya, who was behind me, bit down on her lip. I think she was trying to figure out what those people are up to.

'We didn't get any concrete information from Prince Bagrott so we have no idea what they're planning and what they're after.'

'Freya won't take any action until we have detailed information. That's Freya's way of doing things. Getting flustered on your own before confirming what the opponent is planning to do is the stupidest thing you could do. As such, we won't do anything for now. We just need to wait.'

Just as I reached the market, I saw Nara, who was walking arm in arm with Tarak. Nara greeted us when she saw us then pointed at my arm with bewilderment and asked, "Ah, Your Majesty. What a coincidence to see you here. What happened? Did you get hurt?"

I smiled helplessly. I raised up my arm and replied, "I wouldn't consider it getting hurt, but rather being forced to get hurt. The wound is fine. I was just using it as a weapon to scare people. In reality, I'm fine. But someone got hurt in front of my eyes, and they're dead for that matter."

"Really? I noticed that the entrance to the Royal Palace was sealed today. I also saw red blood spill out from there, so I have a hunch as to what happened. I never thought that you would give the order to kill, though. You did not kill all the people who blocked the entrance now, did you? You do not look to be a violent individual. Or did a conflict break out?"

"A conflict would be more appropriate. I also didn't stop it. I did want to stop it, but those Valkyries wouldn't obey my orders."

"Nara nodded and responded, "Ah, that is very normal. I noticed that your guards were not the same team that came with you to the desert. The Valkyries

only follow Her Majesty's orders. It appears that they see you as a very separate entity to Her Majesty. Your Majesty, perhaps I should not be the one to say this, but your current guards do not belong to you, so your safety is at a lot of risk. Plus, you should also be aware that the Valkyries have always been a squad that kills. There is no reasoning with them. Do you feel assured in your position?"

"The order Her Majesty gave them is to protect me; therefore, they're unlikely to harm me."

"No, no, no, I do not care about them. You are the Crown Prince, after all; hence, they would not harm you. I think you should be most concerned about those vassal state's envoys and those various rulers." Nara shook her head while looking at me. She then tilted her head and with a smile said, "You must have detected something, right? What happened at the entrance of the Royal Palace is by no means something that happened by chance..."

"Please wait a moment, Miss Nara." From behind me, Freya cut Nara off. Nara stopped with surprise. She then looked at Freya, who was a head shorter than her, and asked, "What's the matter? Do you have something to say?"

"I do." Freya looked at her with a serious look and sternly requested, "We never told you what precisely happened, so how did you know about what took place at the entrance of the Royal Palace? We only told you there was a conflict. We never mentioned anything about who was involved nor did we tell you that it was blocked. How exactly did you know so much? You must know something, right? If you consider His Majesty a friend, please share everything you know."

Nara froze. She then smiled helplessly. She scratched her head and replied, "What a failure. I was being cautious, yet still let it slip, and a little girl caught me for that matter... All right, all right. Since you have caught me, I shall not hide it any further to avoid creating to distrust. I shall tell you everything I know now. When we came here, an envoy came to my camp and gave me a list of names. He asked me to come to the Royal Capital with all the vassal states and to all block up the entrance to the Royal Palace at the same time."

I frowned.

'It sounds as though there really is somebody scheming behind the scenes and

has contacted the vassal states. So they did gather together deliberately.'

"But that is all that I know, as I refused him." Nara looked at me and went on, "Nevertheless, I know what happened now. They came to challenge His Majesty's dignity and dominance. If His Majesty failed to handle it properly, they would go and speak poorly about him in front of Her Majesty."

"What would they stand to gain from that?"

"Who knows? How would we know what the person behind the scene is thinking? I would presume they want to strip you of your right as the Crown Prince. It would be comprehensible if you had brothers, but you are an only-child so nobody benefits from you losing your right as the Crown Prince. Thus, I cannot see how the schemer benefits from this. I have no idea."

I nodded. Freya tightly bit down on her lip and engaged in her own thinking.

'It seems that Nara only knows this much.'

I looked at Nara and sincerely thanked her, "Thank you, Nara."

Nara lingered for a moment before responding with a smile, "You do not need to thank me. Your Majesty, I only told you this because this young lady caught me. If you must thank someone, you should thank her."

"No, I'm thanking you for turning them down and not teaming up with the vassal states."

'I'm seriously grateful for that.'

'Nara didn't gain anything from me. I'm useless to her, but Nara chose to turn down the vassal states out of friendship. For that, I'm grateful to her. You can't measure this sort of trust with money or benefits.'

"That is because I saw something with you that made me very happy." Nara smiled. She reached her slender finger out to point at my chest. With her mischievous gaze, she elaborated, "I saw hope in you. The hope of becoming an Emperor. Because of that hope, I think I will benefit more if I ally myself with you. As such, if you must thank someone, thank yourself."

"But..., your trust..."

"There is no such thing as trust without rhyme or reason. Your Majesty, trust

is something that is nurtured with time and benefits.”

Nara smiled. She then tightly wrapped her arm around Tarak’s. She narrowed her eyes, then smiled and continued, “I want to have a tour of the Royal Capital, so I shall not spend any more time with you today, Your Majesty. If we spend too long together, the other vassal states will start trouble with me. So goodbye, Your Majesty. The Royal Capital is very pretty and prosperous. I sincerely hope that I will be able to come here one day to witness your ascension.”

“I don’t think you’ll get to see it.” I chuckled. I then looked to the North and seriously rhetorically asked, “This is Hilles City, not Troy City. If I’m going to be crowned, I must be crowned in my own nest, no?”

Ch. 19

“Your Majesty, the lord of Socina City, Karana Dominique Von Testermills has arrived and seeks an audience.”

I nodded then placed my cup of tea down and stood up. Luna came up from behind. She looked at the breakfast on the table and in a concerned voice said, “Your Majesty, you have not finished your breakfast. I think you should have them wait a little longer. You have lots of work today, too. If you do not eat breakfast, your body will not be able to handle it.”

“It’s all right, Luna. I can eat something on the way, and it’s not as though I didn’t eat anything. I had some fruit.” I turned my back to face Luna so that she could help me with my cape. Luna patted my shoulder and then pouted, “You got hurt, as well, and yet these jobs are all piled up together...”

“I didn’t really get hurt. It was just an urgent tactic. Don’t worry.”

I then stroked Luna’s face. While Freya looked at me with a complex gaze, I grabbed her hand and said, “Let’s go, Freya.”

“All right.” Freya nodded, and then left the dining hall with me. She looked at me with an odd gaze then scoffed, “Onii-sama, I no longer want to comment on

how you behave, but I heard that someone tried to make an attempt at the Royal Princess. So if you cherish the Princess, you best to be mindful of your behaviour, so as to not disappoint her.”

“What?!”

All of my attention was focused on this news.

‘Though I trust that Nier won’t betray me, I’m still upset about it. What, is he trying to make me a cuck?! Get out of here. There’s no way I’ll forgive him. I’ll have him killed!’

“I heard that the son of the finance minister went to the backyard while his father was discussing business with Her Majesty and tried to tease the Princess.”

“What happened afterwards?”

“Afterwards, he nearly got choked to death by the Princess. I heard that he is still mentally weak and lying in bed completely immobilised. I guess she gave him a fright.”

‘Ah, I get it now... That’s Nier all right. Teasing Nier is a ticket to death. If that’s how it is now, I don’t need to go after him. I actually feel a little bad that he’s now suffering a psychological trauma; in saying that, I think that Nier is doing a great job controlling herself now. If it took place a month ago, I wouldn’t be surprised if she took his head off. After hearing “almost died”, I feel that Nier has lost her killing intent.’

‘Uhm, it’s joyous news. So if my affair with Luna gets exposed, there won’t be a tragic and brutal consequence, I don’t think.’

“Forget it then. If Nier has done that already, there’s no point in me doing any more. He must be aware of the consequences awaiting that sort of behaviour now, right? Nier didn’t tell me about it, though.”

“Perhaps it is because she felt it was not a good idea to tell you that someone tried to flirt with her. If you got angry, it would make her feel that she did something wrong to you.”

‘That’s true. Being courted by a guy isn’t something females can speak about

publicly, especially when Nier has that twisted sort of view of love, thinking that, since she married me, she must protect her loyalty to me. Being teased in that manner and not killing him must've dissuaded her from telling me I guess.'

'To be honest, I'm very interested in Lord Karana. I didn't get to see her face last time, but I'll get to see it this time. Up to now, she's the second one to trick me. The first one who tricked me is dead already. However, I have no comment on Karana.'

'After all, we both got what we were after. I have nothing to say about being tricked into falling for her trap, as I tried to trick them first, but had it reversed on me. Further, Karana showed me due respect and sincerity when we spoke. She didn't snatch; instead, she chose to trade so I have a good impression of her.'

'That said, Freya had no good feelings about her, viewed her with hostility.'

When we got to the entrance of the Royal Palace, I never thought that Karana wouldn't be in the guest hall, but downstairs when I came down. She was dressed in a purple formal dress. She had pure-white skin akin to snow on a mountain. Her facial features were exquisite and delicate as the most precious world's treasure. Her pale-purple earrings matched her dress. Her marble-like shoulders that were white as milk looked gentle and shook gently accompanying her movements. Her eyes that resembled amethyst jewels contained affection, but would occasionally show hints of wisdom.

In that moment, I suddenly felt that if mom had me marry her, I might've agreed to it.

When she saw me, she shook her light-blond hair. Then she softly chuckled as she extended her hand wearing a purple silk glove toward me. In her steady, and yet clear voice, she greeted me, "It is the first time I am meeting you, Your Majesty. I am Karana Dominique Von Testersmill."

I nodded with a smile and extended my hand out to shake her slightly cold hand, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Lord Karana. I am the Prince of the Rosvenor Empire, Troy Galadriel Rosvenor."

She smiled and said, "This can be considered our first meeting. Please allow me to apologise to you for what happened last time."

‘Though she said that, I’m fully aware that she was just being polite. She, certainly, wasn’t apologetic. Actually, she was happy...’

I shook my head with a smile and replied, “It’s fine. We both got what we want. I didn’t get to see you last time. Now that I get to see you, I must admit that you are truly beautiful.”

“Is that so? Thank you for very much for your praise, Your Majesty. I am aware of how beautiful your wives are; therefore, I dare not consider myself beautiful before you.”

“No. It’s precisely because my wives are very beautiful that you must be very beautiful for me to praise you for your beauty.”

“Hehe. Thank you for the compliment. I am very happy.”

She blushed and revealed a shy smile. I, too, smiled. The two of us looked at each other and she blushed while being shy to look at me. As I looked at the beautiful Karana, I had a thought.

‘If Mommy Elizabeth were to lead her to me and tell me she was my wife, I’d probably be very happy.’

“Ah!!”

Just as the atmosphere between us started to become flirtatious, Freya pinched my back from behind causing me to exclaim from the pain. I turned my head around to see Freya looking at me with an enraged look. I smiled helplessly.

‘We have to start proper business now. I don’t know why I say this sort of stuff when I see such a pretty girl...’

Karana wiped her smile away, and then smiled apologetically as she said, “Let us enter the guest hall then, Your Majesty. It was a pleasure to hear what you said, Your Majesty. Thank you.”

Glossary

*For distinction purposes, I will only emphasise Imperial Princess/Royal Princess where necessary; otherwise, I’ll use just Princess if it should be obvious

**Due to reasons in the old days, women being hit on was commonly the

fault of the women, not the man, because it was perceived to be her fault for being provocative or unseemly in some way, and hence the stigma Troy mentions.

Ch. 20

‘Something today made me relatively happy. And that was my Moms’ arrival at the Royal Capital.’

‘Elizabeth and Vyvyan arrived in the Royal Capital today. I think it’s Vyvyan’s first time here in humanity’s Hilles City, so I did everything I could to ensure that the city could give Mommy Vyvyan a good impression. Well, I didn’t make any detailed preparations. since I don’t think Vyvyan is very keen on resplendent things. She just needed to see humanity’s prosperity.’

‘I only realised how unnecessary my preparations were when I was making the preparations. I was going to get people to gather on their route to welcome them, but when I said the Empress was returning to the Royal Capital tomorrow. The people excitedly began preparing things to welcome her without me telling them what to do. The hotels on both sides of the streets with rooms with windows raised their prices up as high as the cost of a small house.’

‘Some even made camp on both sides of the streets, so that they would be in the front row to see Her Majesty tomorrow. In reality, they weren’t going to get to see her because she was hidden by the black curtains on both sides of her horse carriage. But despite that, the people were literally going to fight for a spot as madmen would.’

‘Some of them got dressed in their most luxurious clothes to await the Empress’s arrival.’

‘A team of Valkyries patrolled the streets every hour in order to ensure that there were no congestions. I went once, as well, and saw the streets filled with denizens there to welcome the Empress. I felt a little sour and envious. I know how much mom did for this empire and how much she gave up for it, but not every Emperor is valued and respected this way. The people are the monarch’s

asset. However, the monarch also needs to have the trust of the people to exist. The Empress hadn't set out to war in a decade, but the Empress was still the noble and great Empress they knew in their hearts.'

"What's wrong, Onii-sama? Your expression looks a little weird."

I smiled helplessly then looked at the people sleeping on both sides of the street and softly replied, "Perhaps it's because I mind Her Majesty's monarch status. I'm wondering if I'll be able to be treated by the people the same way one day. If not, then Her Majesty abdicating the throne will bring me endless troubles. My ability to lead is still far inferior compared to Her Majesty's. What must I do to be able to be as good as Mom?"

Freya chuckled, and then answered, "You need to understand that Her Majesty is comparable to the messiah of the world in the eyes of the people of Rosvenor Empire. She alone held up Rosvenor City when it was on its last legs and on the brink of destruction. She virtually never lost a battle with foreign nations and transformed Rosvenor City, an agriculture focused city barely getting by into an empire that expands half of the continent. Everyone naturally admires and respects such power. You are not different. If Her Majesty was the messiah, then it is very difficult for you to have another opportunity to accomplish more than Her Majesty. As long as you can maintain the empire she established and rejuvenate the internal politics and economy, then you will be considered a great Emperor."

"I honestly don't want to be resigned to that..."

"What are you not willing to accept? You must understand that Her Majesty was not treated in this fashion back then. Back then, she smashed her own throne. At the time, every day was filled with tension. Her Majesty's battles to revive the nation were not relaxing by any means. If it is Her Majesty's status that you are envious off, you are engaging in a most pointless endeavour."

Freya sternly looked at me and elaborated, "Sacrifices and gains are directly proportional. That is why Her Majesty has her current status. Since you do not have that sort of opportunity, you should set your mind at rest and be an Emperor that maintains."

"Uhm, you're right."

I nodded. I tugged on the reins of my battle steed and looked to the entrance of the Royal Capital.

‘Where would my moms be right now? They should be where the fertile lands are now, right? They’ll arrive tomorrow morning. I do miss my moms. I’m not sure how others see them, but I know that they’re just ordinary moms in front of me... Okay, let me correct that. With the way they occasionally turn creepy, I can’t fairly say that they’re normal moms. This time, Mommy Elizabeth has firmly made up her mind to abdicate the throne and return home as a mother to raise her child, while Mommy Vyvyan said her body was getting old... Yeah, my foot she is. She just wants to keep me... She doesn’t want to be the Queen.’

‘In that case, I’ve suddenly got two burdens to carry all of a sudden. My two moms will become more normal mothers too as a result, especially Mommy Elizabeth. If she was a cold-blooded killer, who’d kill without batting an eye at the start, she’s now a gentle mom.’

‘But maybe Mom chose to abdicate the throne since gentleness and a monarch aren’t a good combination.’

‘That’s enough.’

“Your Majesty, we will be able to arrive at the Royal Capital tomorrow.”

“Ah, all right.”

Alice looked at Vyvyan ,who was sitting opposite Elizabeth playing chess with her, with a slightly hostile look. Normally, the one playing chess with Her Majesty would be Alice. Vyvyan didn’t mind, though. Basically, the human Valkyries on this side are somewhat hostile to Vyvyan, not that she minded, though.

Vyvyan didn’t bring her guard unit. Not a single elven Imperial Guard was present. That was how confident Vyvyan was with herself when it came to facing attacks at any given moment. Elizabeth herself didn’t have any intentions of harming Vyvyan, either, as they have both come to an agreement on a few things for their child, and that was since they could accept each other being at his side, why not continue that way?

However, the two of them avoided the fact that humans wouldn’t accept

elves and vice versa. The war a decade ago has put a wall between the two races. That said, the two monarchs both had their own agendas for the war, so the both of them deliberately tried to forget the war.

“I feel that your people are hostile to me.”

“What, do you mind it?”

Vyvyan made her next move and then replied, “No, I don’t. It’s just that if your Valkyries and I come into conflict with each other in the city, my son would be made a joke of, wouldn’t he? Further, do you think it’s a good idea to have your Valkyries guard my son? Didn’t I tell you that I feel that your people are trying to harm my son?”

“They won’t.” Elizabeth waved her hand and absent-mindedly explained, “The Valkyries are my most trusted squad. How could they harm my son? Plus, it makes perfect sense for me to have my most trusted squad protect my most beloved son. So of course I would trust the Valkyries with the task.”

“Unfortunately, your Valkyries only obey your orders. My son will, consequently, have to suffer during this time, huh?”

“He just needs to provide the guests with a reception. The Valkyries don’t have anything they can do, either.”

“Hey Elizabeth, to me it feels as though you’ve recently fallen in love again.” Vyvyan placed her chess piece down. She then frowned at Elizabeth and asked, “You always have this issue when you fall in love. Your mood will be randomly good, you randomly be confident and you randomly trust everyone. Don’t you notice it? You’re completely different to how you normally are. Your face is radiant as though you’re in love again, too. What happened to you?”

Elizabeth touched her face. She looked a little dazed, but then she switched it for an ambiguous smile. She replied, “Fallen in love? I do, actually, feel that way, because my son is becoming more and more similar to my husband. Standing next to him makes me feel that I’m standing next to my husband...”

Ch. 21

“Your Majesty!!”

‘When the silhouette of the Empress’s escort appeared on the horizon, the soldiers on the city walls shouted out. The Valkyries and I stood outside the city waiting for mom’s escort. Those in the front leading the escort were also Valkyries on white horses. Whenever I see them, I remember Nier welcoming me home in her white uniform.’

‘But Nier hasn’t worn that uniform in a long time. Nier, who has gotten used to dresses and skirts, hasn’t touched her Valkyrie uniform in a long time, I don’t think. In my opinion, the Valkyrie uniforms gives off its own vibe... Lucia and I did once do... while she was in her shadow squad uniform... We were happier...’

The escort slowly arrived before us. Two Valkyries gave each other a nod. I dismounted and went up to the carriage to pull the door open. Before I could speak, two silhouettes leapt at me. My first reaction was fright. I thought there were assassins were hiding in there to kill me.

However, I then smelt the familiar scents in my arms. I took two steps back to steady myself, since catching them both almost threw my back out. I smiled as I stroked the heads of the two who leapt at me. With surprise and joy, I exclaimed, “Nier?! Lucia?! How come you two are here too?!”

“Mm... I wanted to be with you, Your Majesty... Though I said all that, I still want to be by your side...”

“Your Highness, we’ve been apart for so long and my body is stabilising, too. I also wanted to see you. I really, really wanted to see you.”

Lucia and Nier did everything they could to knock the other way in order to monopolise my embrace, so they kept wriggling around in my arms. Their gazes for each other sure didn’t show a hint of joy from having not met in a long time. Their gazes were filled with rage and hostility for each other. They wished for nothing more than to slash the other to death, and then curl up in my arms in peace.

“Okay, okay, you two. We haven’t entered the city yet. It’s a little too early for you to be clinging to him.”

A domineering voice came from behind them. The two of them paused and

then stepped back from me. I looked behind them to see Vyvyan smiling and Elizabeth with a stern expression. I made a small bow then smiled and greeted them, “Your Majesty, Your Highness, welcome to Hilles City.”

Vyvyan nodded with a smile. I noticed her body dangerously shudder.

‘I’m fairly certain she wanted to leap at me like Lucia and Nier did. Maybe she would’ve been the first to leap at me before if my two wives weren’t present.’

Vyvyan’s finger quivered.

‘I’m fairly certain she wanted to leap over and kiss me.’

Elizabeth looked at me, but hesitated for a moment before asking, “Ah... Uhm... Yeah... So, have there been any problems in the Royal Capital during your stay?”

“Everything has been well, Your Majesty.”

“Good. Let’s enter the city now then.”

Elizabeth kept it short. Nier then quickly requested, “Your Majesty, I would like to ride a horse with His Majesty into the city.”

“Oh?” Elizabeth nodded and asked, “Will you be all right?”

“I will be all right. My child will be fine.”

Nier nodded. Lucia then raised her hand and said, “Me too, then. I want to ride with His Highness into the city, as well then.”

“All right.”

Vyvyan nodded. She provided Lucia with a barrier, so Lucia was actually safer than Nier. As a result, Lucia could run about unlike Nier. According to what Lucia, herself, said, she was always particularly tired, because her child absorbed her mana to take shape. However, things have stabilised now so she can run around now.

Vyvyan shut the carriage’s door. She then patted her chest. She let out a sigh of relief and exclaimed, “I nearly died. I’m going to die. My son was so cool, so handsome and so cute just now. I almost couldn’t help myself from hugging him... My goodness, this is so scary. My son is becoming cooler and cooler, and

he's becoming more and more handsome now. He's my son without a doubt. The older he becomes, the more I like him..."

Elizabeth hesitated for a moment then looked at her own hand and responded, "I do envy Nier and Lucia. My son has never been so intimate with me, yet they can get hugs from him. I was, honestly, a little upset when he hugged them just now. Moreover, my son has grown up."

Vyvyan pursed her lips into a smile then sighed, "Seeing my son so old and tall now makes me feel that I've aged. Thinking back to how we used to live makes me feel strangely nostalgic. He grew up while we were fighting each other for him. My Troy doesn't need anybody to look after him anymore."

"He's *my* son." Elizabeth emphasised that again before saying, "You're right, you're right, my son has grown up. We can focus on staying at home to raise him now. Troy now feels similar to Inard."

"Uhm." Vyvyan nodded and then said, "This is my first time at your Royal Capital. What does your Royal Capital have that could amaze me?"

"Probably the surrounding scenery."

Elizabeth pulled one of the veils open, and then leaned on the window. She used the black veil to cover her face. Vyvyan looked at the massive crowd of people outside with astonishment. Everybody was loudly yelling from upstairs, both sides of the street and even people standing on the roofs. Everybody's face was red with excitement.

Vyvyan listened to the people shouting outside. Her ears twitched due to the shouting. The people below shouted, "long live Your Majesty, long live Your Majesty".

"Humans. You humans sure are unnaturally good at reproducing, huh..."

"So you're saying we're like rats?" Elizabeth chuckled. She wasn't offended. She then continued, "It's because we're open-minded. We wouldn't live in a small forest until we die. We will go outside, discover countless lands and countless places to improve our homes. We have short lifespans; hence, we do our best to love others. We won't wait for love. Instead, we'll go and proactively search for love."

“I think I understand why Onii-sama fell in love with you back then now.”

Vyvyan pulled her neck back then chuckled and went on, “After all, you’re much more proactive than I am. I think that being as passive as my Onii-sama was, left defenceless against you. Whatever, though. Let’s put Onii-sama aside for now. I won’t be giving up when it comes to my son, though.”

“I thought we had reached an agreement on this.”

“Not at all,” Vyvyan looked at Elizabeth and said, “We might be able to make compromises when it pertains to my child. At Troy City, we could take care of my son together. This time, however, I won’t be letting you have my son again.”

Elizabeth shuddered. She then looked at Vyvyan with a cold look, “Don’t tell me you...”

Vyvyan snickered and then casually responded, “Ah... You don’t happen to think that I can’t do anything just because you’re around, do you?”

Ch. 22

I don’t know what happened in the carriage, but after they got out, Elizabeth didn’t look well. Without saying a word and while ignoring everybody’s gaze, she pulled me straight into her embrace. She gave me a gentle kiss on my forehead then in her hoarse voice asked, “My son... just how many... burdens have you carried... for that so-called bloodline...? How much did you have to put up with?”

“Huh?”

I had no idea what Mommy Elizabeth was talking about. I was honestly baffled. Mommy Elizabeth didn’t explain anything; instead, she winsomely stroked my head, completely ignoring the gazes of the Valkyries behind her and the denizens. I didn’t care, though. Mommy Elizabeth is about my height. Other than having to bend at the knees a little when she pulled me into her bosom, it was quite nice.

“Your Majesty!”

Alice cleared her throat in a muffled voice from behind. Elizabeth let go of me, and then scrubbed my head. She gently cleared her throat then looked at me and said, “Have you met all of the rulers of the vassal states? Son, were there any lords you are particularly interested in? I think that the one you are most interested in will definitely be the most outstanding among them.”

I chuckled.

‘Frankly, I could split the lords I’ve met over the last three days into three categories. The first category is the ones who clearly have a good impression of me. Karana and Nara belong to this category. The second category is those who don’t hate me. They politely try to ingratiate themselves with me. Prince Bagrott is one such example. The last category is those who are clearly hostile towards me. They view Castor as their leader, and of course, that includes their regent and a few lords from the desert, because I killed their people and supported Karnashun.’

Elizabeth and Vyvyan walked next to me. Lucia and Nier went off to the room to prepare first. I answered Mommy Elizabeth as we walked. Elizabeth wore an ambiguous smile as she patiently listened to everything I had to say. I didn’t finish until we arrived at her room and sat down.

“Son, your performance has been quite good to be able to know all of the lords and appropriately handle that matter.” Consoled, Elizabeth stroked my head, and then said, “Son, you need not worry. You can’t get everyone to like you. Dislike isn’t a useless emotion. You just need to think about how to make those who hate you, fear you.”

Vyvyan suddenly hugged me from behind. I felt something heavy pressed down on my head. Vyvyan wrapped her arm around to my chest and said, “You humans’ matters sure are complicated. If we were in the elven lands, I’d just need to crown my son. There’s no dislike or not dislike with us.”

“Bloodlines are everything for you elves, after all. Humans’ birth origins don’t cause them to be affixed to a certain status, though. Humans can get everything they want through their own efforts, and therefore naturally need power to maintain everything of theirs, too. What you have is oppression, while we have power balances.”

Vyvyan pouted and responded, “I feel so sorry for my son right now. He hasn’t even gotten any good rest this whole entire time. Look at how thin he has become. Elizabeth, my son didn’t come here to suffer senselessly. I really want to duel you right now. I want to separate your neck into as many pieces as my son has lost in weight.”

A heavy and intense murderous intent came from behind me. Vyvyan was serious...

Elizabeth stroked my face while feeling apologetic, too. She sighed, “I don’t want my son to suffer, either; nevertheless, he must undergo this experience to train himself. Son, don’t blame Mommy. Mommy doesn’t want to be so heartless, either, but... but... you truly do need to walk this part of your journey.”

“Speaking of which, aren’t you doing this just so that you can abdicate the throne and live your own life? Is that what a mother should be doing?! Isn’t this the most selfish idea you’ve had? You accuse me of being unlike a mother while I do everything for my child’s happiness! I do everything for the sake of letting him be with Lucia and for the sake of allowing him to live happily forever. I do everything for my son! You do everything for yourself! You don’t love Troy! You just want to give your lonely self a family!”

Vyvyan randomly got angry.

‘Actually, I’m certain they had an intense argument already and this is just the continuation of it. The two of them arguing is normal. I wouldn’t be surprised if they met with their armies at this point. Except, I have no idea what they’re arguing about this time.’

“I’m different to you!!”

Elizabeth jumped up and roared back. She yanked me out of Vyvyan’s arms and pulled me tightly into her bosom, thereby nearly asphyxiating me. She looked at Vyvyan and retorted, “You can accompany my son until the end, but I can’t. I only have a few decades of life. This is the only time I can spend with my son. I didn’t fulfil the duties as his mother when he was young, so I want to make up for my own mistake. I want to keep my son company at his side. Is that strange of me to desire so?! Is it selfish?! I just want to take care of my son! I

just want that sort of life!”

Vyvyan looked back at Elizabeth. She took in a deep breath, clenched her teeth and thundered, “My son has been put in danger here with you over and over! Over and over! You said you’d protect him well every time, but he comes back covered in wounds every single time! Aren’t you the Empress?! Aren’t you the leader of this empire? If you can’t even guarantee my son’s safety, by what means are you going to protect him?! You’re a failure of a mother! How are you going to look after him?! My son has been hurt here time and time again! And I bet he’ll get hurt again this time!”

“He won’t!”

Elizabeth locked me in her tightly embrace as if she was hanging onto her last straws. She choked on her words as she said, “I won’t let me son be in danger. I’m by his side this time. I will make sure that I am a qualified mother. I will protect my son. I will protect my son even if it costs me my life... I want to live with my son way too much... I... I don’t have memories of my son... I’m truly afraid that I won’t even have a memory worth recalling when I get old... I... I.....”

Elizabeth started to tear up. I gently hugged Elizabeth, who was crying, and gently stroked her back. I then looked at Mom and sincerely said, “Mom, don’t worry. I chose all of this myself. Even if there is danger and even if it’s tiring, I can make it through it, because I don’t want to just be a kid at your sides. I want to become a great person as you two, as well!”

Vyvyan looked at me with a blank look. She wore a very complex expression as though she was complaining but at the same time praising, as well as a nostalgic feeling from her soul. It was akin to the spectre of reason. She silently looked at me. A moment afterwards, she looked up at me and gently stroked my head. She said, “Mommy won’t stop you, son. You’re Mommy’s best son, and the best man in Mommy’s heart, but... if you feel that humanity doesn’t suit you..., come back to the elven side... You can become an even greater Elven King there...”

Ch. 23

“Hurry, hurry, hurry. Hurry up and finish the makeup. Her Majesty’s clothes still need to be prepared!”

“Who’s holding Her Majesty’s cape?! Who used to hold it?”

“It was always Castell.”

“Castell isn’t here now.”

The Empress sat in her chair with her eyes shut and allowed the makeup artist to do what she had to and speak to the others. The protocol officer, who was behind her, hesitated before asking, “So do you have a better candidate, Your Majesty?”

The Empress laughed and replied, “My son, of course. Did you need to ask? It’s a given that my son can be the one to hold my cape. Is there anyone else? Plus, both of us will be appearing at the annual meeting, so isn’t it perfect for him to hold my cape?”

“I shall go and notify His Majesty, in that case.”

The protocol officer nodded.

‘Yep, that’s why I rushed here.’

‘Tonight’s banquet is a banquet to welcome Her Majesty back. All of the lords of the vassal states were invited. However, this wasn’t the annual meeting banquet. The year here ends with the end of winter. After that day is spring. There are three days to go until spring.’

‘That’s when the official annual meeting banquet is held.’

“Your Majesty, you must hold Her Majesty’s cape properly. Specifically...”

“You don’t need to tell me. I already know.”

‘I once held Her Majesty’s cape for her. It wasn’t the official evening banquet; hence, her clothing for the banquet was a military army uniform, instead of her regular military uniform and a long cape. It carried her unique suave aura. It could also be considered her usual getup for when she attended banquets.’

‘Mommy Elizabeth didn’t prepare a face veil this time, either. As she was meeting with lords of cities, she didn’t cover her face. Therefore, she did her

makeup properly this time. Elizabeth is very pretty to begin with, so when she wore makeup on, she became even more preciously beautiful. Standing next to her, I couldn't tell her age. Perhaps beauty can surpass time. Not even time could diminish her beauty.'

I held mom's cape and stood behind her. She turned her head around to look at me with a smile, and then stroked my head.

'She didn't say anything else, but I could see boundless trust and consolation in her gaze. To be frank, to be allowed to hold the Empress's cape in front of so many important people proved that I was someone worth her trust, as well as being her most trusted person just as Castell was back then.'

'Back then, Castell was her most trusted individual. I don't know why Castell isn't with the Empress this time. It seems like he stayed at Troy City. To be honest, I'm not very happy about having someone who's not on my side looking over Troy City, but I can't ask Her Majesty to call him back now.'

"Let's go. The lords are waiting for us."

The Empress turned around, and the servants pulled the door open. My eyes sighted gold lights in an instant. Noise and the air of power rushed at me. All of the people present in the banquet hall right now are the people who wield the most power on this continent, yet all of them were silent as they respectfully welcomed the ruler of the continent.

"Ladies and gentlemen."

Her Majesty opened her arms with a smile and then walked forth with pride. Nothing could hide that their hairs stood up. The jingling from the ground loudly echoed. It was as though she was stepping on their hearts with every step. All of them couldn't help but bend at the waist. Some are born rulers. Nobody could withstand her imposing and oppressive aura. The Empress smiled as she looked at them on her left and right while walking forward. I walked behind her. I tried my best to hold her cape steady in my hands.

The Empress arrived in front of everyone. She twisted her body with a quick spin and saw the people that called themselves her vassals with their heads down. I could see Nara looking at the Empress with a fanatical gaze of loyalty from underneath the Empress's arms. Nara is one who worships the Empress

and has been trying to imitate her all the time.

“Happy new year.”

The Empress smiled as she greeted the lords. She wore a confident and proud smile, which made her radiate from head to toe. She opened her arms as she looked at them and spoke.

“We sincerely wish you a happy new year, Your Majesty!”

The rulers, lords and everyone below loudly responded as though the spotlight was focused on Her Majesty. Elizabeth laughed, and then quickly pulled me over into her arms from behind. Her long cape quickly dropped to the ground, but she didn’t care in the least. Instead, she patted me on my shoulder and said, “You all may have not met him yet, but this is my most beloved son, and the next Crown Prince of the Rosvenor Empire. He wasn’t with me before. I believe that you’ve met him already. I wonder what you all think of him... Of course, that’s not what I want to ask you this time. I’ve just returned to the Royal Capital today, my Princess is pregnant and I’m finally getting to meet all of you again. I am in a very good mood. This is a happy banquet, so ladies and gentleman, enjoy yourselves!”

‘I noticed that the gazes the people below had for me were different. Needless to say, I’m referring to the three factions feeling. Some were cautious while some were hostile. There was also Nara and Karana, who were smiling, as well as Bagrott, who was scared. I didn’t actually intend to have Her Majesty punish Prince Bagrott or anything. I haven’t even mentioned the plot behind the scenes yet.’

‘I must find an opportunity to bring it up.’

Elizabeth grabbed hold of my hand and said, “I shall dance the opening dance tonight. Come, Son. Let us dance the opening dance today.”

“Ah.....”

Elizabeth pulled me into her embrace all of a sudden. She grabbed my hand as if she’d done it a million times before.

‘As opposed to saying that I danced the opening dance with Mom, it would be better to describe it as me being a wooden puppet pulled around. Mom dances

very well. Every step is steady.'

I looked at Mom's bright smile in front of me and followed her steps. My only reason for learning to dance was to respond to these situations. I was a disaster, but Mom perfectly followed my steps. The two of us spun a circle in front of everyone. I saw every face before my eyes as we spun and finally refocused my gaze on Mom's face.

Nara grabbed Tarak's hand, and then appeared next to us. That's when my dance with Mom just ended. Mom laughed and let go of my hand. That's when I realised my hand was covered in sweat. Mom gave my head a firm scrub then walked up to one side and began speaking with people from the vassal states.

I stood in place and spaced out. I looked at Mom's back feeling slightly dizzy. I kept feeling that the person in front of me before wasn't Mom, but Nier or Lucia.

'Perhaps dancing really can make people develop feelings. Why do I feel that Mom is so beautiful?'

'Why did it feel like my heart beat so fast when I danced with Mom? Was it because I was moving around or did I become slightly smitten with Mom?'

Ch. 24

"Castell, are you going to help us or not?"

"Help you with what? Help you people that have already failed? You saw His Majesty's ability to retaliate, didn't you?! What are you still dissatisfied with?!"

Castell slammed his cup down in front of him, causing the wine inside to spill out, which left a dark red stain on the table. Alice looked at Castell. She clenched her teeth and replied, "That was our mistake. We didn't get it perfect. I never expected my own Valkyries to foil my plan. I'll inform the Valkyries this time so that won't happen again. Castell, are you no longer loyal to Her Majesty?"

"Who's the one who's no longer loyal, Alice?! Shouldn't you be asking

yourself that question?!”

Castell quickly stood up and furiously looked at Alice. He thumped his chest as he shouted. He had never lost his self-composure before, but the strange loneliness he felt and the alcohol made him completely lose control. He lost his usual calm composure and roared the way a wounded animal would, “Me! I’m the one who’s most loyal to the Empress! Her Majesty ordered me to stay behind so I stayed behind! Her Majesty asked you to protect His Majesty, but instead, you sneaked back here! Everything you’re doing right now is betraying Her Majesty! Everything you’re doing is traitorous!”

“Do you not know what I’m doing this this for?! I’m doing this for Her Majesty!! I’m doing this for her blood sweat and tears! I’m doing this for my Empress! My Empress needs me! She’s not sober! She needs me to wake her from her stupor! This empire needs a suitable successor!”

“So why can’t you acknowledge His Majesty?! His Majesty defeated Castor, the church, the desert and even foiled your plans! Why can’t he become the successor of this empire?! Alice, you’re ignorant! You’ve lost it now! Your goal is to kill His Majesty now! It’s no longer about helping Her Majesty’s empire! His Majesty is already capable of leading this empire; why do you refuse to acknowledge that?! I believe that you wouldn’t acknowledge it even if it was someone else other than His Majesty! You’re in a morbid state now!”

Castell slammed the table hard, causing his cup to tip over and all the wine inside to spill out. The wine quickly spilt all over the table surface and dyed the entire tablecloth red.

“I’m in a morbid state?! How am I morbid when I’m doing this for Her Majesty?! Has the Prince defeated anyone?! He’s scared of even Nier! This Prince has no battle accomplishments! What right does he have to take the empire Her Majesty spilt her blood to establish?”

“He has the right because Her Majesty’s blood runs in his body! Yes, Her Majesty spilt her blood to establish this empire, but she also exchanged her blood for His Majesty! He can succeed this empire!! I believe that His Majesty can get all of the vassal states to submit to him! Wouldn’t Her Majesty’s empire be protected then?! Our original goal was to let His Majesty succeed the throne

if he had the competence and eliminate him if he didn't have what it took; however, your goal has become completely distorted now!"

"I don't believe it! I don't acknowledge him! How can this Prince that hasn't even fought a war have what it takes to lead this empire?! The army of this empire is invincible, thanks to Her Majesty! What capabilities does this Prince possess to get the army that worships Her Majesty to submit to him? If he can't, then it'll be a mutiny!"

Alice thundered back at the top of her lungs. She may be small in stature, nevertheless, her murderous intent and fury wasn't inferior to Castell's right now. Castell did have his head down to look at her while standing in front of her, but he didn't dare to take another step forward when she was so furious. She could shatter the wall of this room with a single punch.

She furiously extended her hand out and demanded, "Hurry and give me those weapons! I just need those weapons! As long as I have those weapons, I'll be able to prove that everything I'm doing is right!"

"Dream on!!!"

Castell smacked Alice's hand away and yelled at her. That seemed to be Castell's trigger, one that couldn't be touched, but Alice touched it. That was the response of an enraged animal. He grabbed Alice's hair, bent down to her ear and roared, "Because of that batch of stuff of yours, I couldn't return with Her Majesty. It was because of you! Because of you, I nearly lost Her Majesty's trust! It was because of you! It was because of you! You're being stupid! Are you not satisfied with having ruined me to this point?! I can't let you be stupid again! You're revolting now! There's no way I'm siding with you!"

"Are you really not going to give them to me?!"

Alice didn't care about her hair. She narrowed her eyes and coldly glared at Castell as though she was stalking her prey. The cold atmosphere contained the cold of the snowstorm outside. It was, without question, an exposed blade in the air. Castell was grabbing the blade, yes, the sharpest part.

"No. Way!"

Castell clenched his teeth and responded with two words.

He wasn't clenching his teeth due to nervousness or anger, but pain.

Alice pushed Castell away and he grabbed his abdomen as he staggered back a few steps before falling back on the table on his back. His blood and the wine mixed together. His blood and the wine lingered in the air making the atmosphere smell particularly bad. Alice coldly glared at him after stabbing him in his gut. She put one foot on his face and coldly said, "Traitors don't need to live. Castell, out of consideration for our friendship, I'll give you time to reflect on your life. I'll take my leave now, since you don't have what I want here. I'll kill His Majesty to prove to you that I'm right, even without your weapons. Oh, sorry, I forgot that you might not get to see it."

Alice booted his head, and then turned around to leave the room. Castell tightly grabbed the dagger in his abdomen.

The dagger is the Valkyries' weapon. The dagger has a hooked tip so if you forcefully pull it out once it's stabbed into your flesh, you'll rip out your organs or flesh.

It was not to be pulled out.

Consequently, Castell didn't pull it out. Since Alice said that, it meant that the dagger isn't poisoned, so he could still make. He could make it as long as he hadn't bled out all of his blood. He could make it. He could make it.

He just had to shout and he would make it.

Nevertheless, he had no time to treat himself.

'That maniac is heading South. That maniac is going to do what she said for sure. I couldn't stop her. The maniac is going to kill Her Majesty's only son. The maniac really will kill him. There's no one by His Majesty's side that can defeat that maniac. Nier is pregnant while Lucia can't fight. His two mothers should be off hunting while the Prince was surrounded by Valkyries.'

'The Prince will die.'

'I must save His Majesty. Her Majesty's empire has nothing to do with me. Only Her Majesty and I are connected. I am Her Majesty's personal attendant. I don't care what Her Majesty should do. I only care about what she wants to do. So I must go and protect what Her Majesty wants to protect now.'

Castell pressed down on the table covered in blood and wine to get up. He looked toward the South with a gaze of determination and immense loyalty like Alice's, and headed out...

Ch. 25

'Poems and songs are nice things. It's just that I haven't heard any of them since coming here. The annual meeting banquet wasn't a dance ball, but a banquet where everyone was seated separately. Everyone would then write a poem to recite, so it could be considered a very literature and art oriented gathering.'

'Poetry in this world isn't different to the ones from the world I came from, because their text has something which resembles letters. However, their pronunciation contains a degree of level and oblique tones. Poetry needs to rhyme, and the number of words used must be equal. While the requirements aren't high, it's not possible to just write them with the click of a finger, either.'

'Composing poetry is comparable to drawing for the Empress. It's a little difficult for her... I'm standing at the entrance to her room in the inner court right now. I'm here to console her in name, while I'm here to ensure she doesn't act restlessly and whimsically, in actuality. As Vyvyan can move around freely, Elizabeth goes to the outer palace every moment she's free to avoid letting Vyvyan have time alone with me. In reality, however, Vyvyan doesn't get the opportunity. Lucia and Nier cling to me during the day, and then the two of them cling to me at night; consequently, I basically don't have time to be alone with Vyvyan.'

'But despite that, my two moms will still do everything to get close to me, so I can only get her to compose her poem in peace by standing at the entrance of her room. That said, I now feel that mom isn't struggling to compose a poem, because she's restless and whimsical, as she doesn't want to compose a poem, but that she's being restless because she can't think of anything.'

'Mom looked at her pen and paper in front of her. It feels as though asking her

to compose a poem is tougher on her than asking her to draw. Well, I guess that's not right, since Mom is very happy to draw as it's what she wants to do. Composing poems wasn't something she wanted to do, though... That would explain why Mom keeps looking left and right and even playing with the feather on her pen all day.'

I placed the book in my hand down. I looked at Mom, who was bored out of her skin, and said, "Mom, hurry up and compose your poem. You have to read it out tonight."

Mom looked at me and smiled helplessly to reply, "But Mommy doesn't want to compose a poem... Mommy is horrible at this sort of stuff. Mommy never paid attention during any of these classes when Mommy was young. Mommy either wagged lessons or angered the teacher until they left, so... Mommy regrets it now..."

'It sounds as though Mom was a very mischievous princess when she was young. But I guess it makes sense. After all, if she wasn't mischievous, she wouldn't have run to the elves alone and got taken back by them.'

I looked at Mom then opened the book I was reading and replied, "It doesn't seem as if the requirements are very high to me. Why can't you compose a poem, Mom? And nobody will say anything even if you do make a mistake or two."

"You can't say that. Mommy's poems will be saved so Mommy must compose a good one. That's why Mommy burns Mommy's drawings..."

'Oh, so mom is aware of her limitations...'

Mom patted her thigh, and then looked at me with a bright look in her eyes. I knew what she wanted. I walked over and sat on her lap...

'Why do I feel as though I'm a dog...?'

Mom hugged me from behind then reached for her pen and nodded with satisfaction. She said, "This does give me a reassuring feeling, all right. Mommy can compose in peace now, but... Mommy doesn't know what to write..."

I looked at the blank sheet, "Is it hard? You should be able to compose one soon with your skills, Mom."

“Writing a four line one isn’t a problem, but the important part about poetry is being able to express your inner feelings. Mommy values Mommy’s feelings. If Mommy can’t express them, the poem is meaningless.”

‘Why does it sound as though it’s Mom’s excuse to me?’

“Your Majesty, Prince, Your majesty... ah...”

A maid came in and was stunned to see us like this. I, however, cared nothing for shame. The two of us looked at the maid naturally without getting flustered. Mom asked, “What’s wrong? Did something come up?”

The maid looked at us with a dumbstruck and replied, “Ah... Sorry, Your Majesty, Miss Freya wanted to borrow His Majesty for a bit.”

Mom nodded. I walked to the door then quickly turned my head around to look at Mom, “Don’t go running off when I’m not around, Mom. When I come back, I will be checking to see what you’ve done. If you haven’t finished by then, I’ll be having dinner with Mommy Vyvyan tonight.”

“!!”

Mom revealed an astonished expression.

‘I think I went a little overboard with my threat... but seeing mom immediately sit straight up and think seriously, I think it’s all right. After all, I can choose not to go to tonight’s banquet and let Elizabeth deal with all the people from the vassal states, while I eat with Mommy Vyvyan. That was the scariest thing to Elizabeth.’

After leaving Her Majesty’s room, I noticed that the maid next to me kept looking at me with a very odd gaze.

‘Should I prove to her that I’m her biological son and not her lover or something...? What’s wrong with a mother hugging her child?! What’s the problem?!’

Freya didn’t ask to see me for anything important. She just wanted to confirm who would hold power once Her Majesty and Her Highness went off to hunt. There was also the question of having the Valkyries act as guards, since I couldn’t let my condition on full-moon nights get exposed. As such, all Valkyries

will be stationed inside the palace, and I'll have Alice guard this floor for safety sake.

'Alice may not serve me, but she is Her Majesty's bodyguard unit's captain, so she should be Her Majesty's most trusted person.'

'I had Nier and Lucia go with my two Moms to have some fun. Staying in the city would be a little too restrictive for them. I can handle things here alone. I don't have time to go out to play with them. With the Empress here now, the Valkyries weren't so free.'

After finishing discussions with Freya and delegating tasks, I went back to Her Majesty's room. To my surprise, Mom had finished composing her poem. She cheerfully handed me the sheet of paper when she saw me come in and said, "Here, here, here, Son, take a look. Mommy has finished."

I took the sheet of paper.

'I can't help but admire Mom. It was just as I expected. Mom can do anything she puts her mind to.'

The soldiers have withdrawn their army and horses at the Southern mountain. The four seas have been settled and there is nothing left to be worried about. When will I be able to spend my days with my son, Gazing at the snow in the north until I grow old?

'Wow...'

'What do I think...?'

'You could pass this off as a love poem, don't you think...? I don't think Elizabeth intended for it to be one though. She just wanted to keep her son company until old age, that's all.'

"Not bad. I can understand your thoughts, too, Your Majesty. I will ensure that you can live the life of a mother in the future."

Elizabeth didn't reveal a cheerful smile. Instead, she silently nodded and revealed a sad expression. She smiled helplessly and replied, "I knew I wasn't good with composing poems... Didn't I just completely fail to express my feelings...?"

Glossary

*Level and oblique tones refers to the tonal nature of the Chinese language.

Ch. 26

“Dear, is it really all right for you to stay behind alone? How about I stay behind, too? With me protecting you, we’ll be more assured.”

Nier rubbed her lips and looked at me with a gaze of concern. I looked at Nier, who just came out from the blanket and was lying on my chest.

‘I do feel that you’re worried about me, but you’ve got some sticky liquid on the tip of your tongue, you know...? How do you expect me to reply to you in this state...? I have just entered sage mode, so don’t ask me this sort of legitimate question...’

‘I was too careless... I never thought Nier could still do this sort of stuff when she was pregnant!’

I gently stroked Nier’s tummy and softly replied, “How can you protect me in this state? It’s safest for you to be with Mom. Your safety is more important than mine right now. I’ve got Valkyries around me. Are you still worried? Don’t forget that you personally trained them.”

“But...” Nier looked at me a little sadly then sighed after a pause. She looked at me a little upset and went on, “Truthfully... I just wanted to go with you... But it’s safest for you to stay in the city, so... so... you should stay here, Dear.”

“Sorry, Nier.”

I gave her a kiss on her lips then apologetically stroked her head and softly added, “I can’t keep you company this time, Nier. There’s nothing I can do about it, though. Once everything is over, I’ll keep you company, I promise.”

“Uhm... All right.”

Nier nodded, and then leaned on my chest feeling reassured and gradually fell asleep.

I looked at Nier’s hunting attire sitting beneath the moonlight.

‘I can’t help but feel I can’t sleep well tonight. I can’t shake off the sad look in Mom’s eyes from this morning. That rhetorical question, “I knew I wasn’t good

with composing poems... Didn't I just completely fail to express my feelings.....?" confuses me, honestly.'

I rolled over, causing Nier to slip off my chest, and then I tightly hugged her. Nier moaned, and then switched to a more comfortable posture to continue sleeping while I looked at her face and thought to myself in silence.

'I'm confused as to what her expression and words meant. I can't put my finger on it. Maybe I just wasn't willing to comprehend it because I didn't want to believe it.'

'I believe that all of the rulers of the vassal states will understand what Her Majesty means when she reads it out tonight. Wouldn't that turn our matter into a foregone conclusion? Maybe people were already thinking it in the past, but it'll finally be confirmed this time.'

'That said, Her Majesty didn't put it bluntly so I don't think they'll say anything explicitly. I believe that it won't be sudden for her to abdicate the throne afterwards, then. The vassal states will have an opportunity to adjust their positions, and I'll be able to begin making my moves to get them to all recognise me.'

'Whatever the case, Her Majesty is setting out tomorrow. This is a hunting event Her Majesty really enjoys. Vyvyan will be going with her. Vyvyan's attitude towards the various vassal states was amicable, and she displayed herself very gracefully. In no way was she inferior to Elizabeth. If Elizabeth is imposing then Vyvyan is majestic. However, Vyvyan never hesitates to express that she's my mother, regardless of the time and place.'

'For instance, when I was eating some Empress bread and had two drops of honey on my mouth, , Vyvyan appeared before me in an instant before I could wipe my mouth with a napkin, and then pinched my chin and licked the honey off my face before I could utter a word... She then told me to mind myself when eating with a smile...'

'That's a mother... Ah...'

'There's only going to be Freya, Luna and Alice in the capital once they leave. There's not much work left in the Royal Capital, but now that I have time on my hands, I can go and investigate who the one who plotted that incident was. I

won't find any evidence if I go straight to the lords of the vassal states. I'm, therefore, going to start with the people around them to try and find some clues.'

'There was no continuation of it after I dealt with the incident. Perhaps they didn't continue giving me grief, since I handled it appropriately. However, I can't relax. I don't know if they want to do something to me or Her Majesty, so I can't just brush the matter off.'

As I thought about for a while, I randomly fell asleep. When I woke up, Nier was already at the edge of the bed wearing on her hunting attire. Luna stood next to Nier and carefully helped her adjust the ornaments on her clothing, afraid that they'd wake me up.

Nier noticed me looking at her, so she turned her head around and somewhat fearfully said, "Ah, Dear, you're up... Sorry, we were too loud, weren't we?"

I sat up. I hugged Nier and next to her ear replied, "Don't mind it. I should be getting up now anyhow. I need to see you off. Otherwise, I reckon moms will be very upset. Nier, look after yourself. Don't ever force yourself. You're not Lucia so don't compete with Lucia over everything.

"I know, I know."

Nier nodded, and then kissed my lips and said, "I'll look after myself. I'll be sure to look after myself, because I'm carrying our child. Dear, you must look after yourself. Don't let anything happen to you. If something happens, run even if it's embarrassing. You must promise me that. I might not be able to make it back to protect you... The Valkyries around you... might not obey your orders. I'll speak to them before I leave."

"All right. That's a big help as is, Nier..."

I was relieved to hear that.

'Nier is the Valkyries' respected sword instructor, after all, so I trust that they will do her a favour... But with Alice around, I think there's a limit to what Nier can do. That said, I don't think Alice would do anything to me. Alice is Her Majesty's most loyal bodyguard, and I'm Her Majesty's son. Alice hasn't shown me any hostility thus far; hence, I think we'll be able to treat each other with

respect.'

I got dressed and then went to pick up Lucia, who was still tired. After we had breakfast, we went to the entrance of the Royal Palace. We saw Her Majesty's grandiose hunting team. They truly were grandiose. It looked as though Her Majesty was going out on a tour. The guards and hunting dogs surrounded the team. There also seemed to be what resembled birds flying in the air around the team.

"Your Majesty, Your Highness, I am here to see you off."

"Uhm, Son."

Elizabeth nodded. Her hunting attire displayed her heroic, suave and imposing aura, while Vyvyan was dressed as per usual. It didn't seem as though she was joining in with their hunting activity.

Vyvyan bent down at her waist to stroke my head. She winked; then with a smile said, "Son, remember that if something comes up, just use the necklace to call me back. Son, you must keep the necklace safe. It's the only way mom can sense you."

"I know, Mom."

I nodded and bid my moms goodbye. I watched the grandiose team leave. I followed them all the way to the entrance of the city before stopping. Seeing my two wives and two moms leave surprisingly made me feel lonely.

"Let's head back, Your Majesty."

A voice came from behind. I turned my head around to see the slightly dangerous Alice riding on her horse. Alice gave me a smile, and then made way. She said, "We must get along during this period of time. Your Majesty... leave your safety to me."

Ch. 27

After dinner, Luna helped me adjust my cape from behind, and then quietly asked me, "Your Majesty, will you be back on time tonight?"

“Uhm, I should be since there isn’t really any work nowadays.”

Luna patted my shoulders and with a smile, said, “If there is not much work, do not exhaust yourself. If Her Majesty returns and sees you thin again, I will be scolded. Moreover, if you come back early, I will not have to stand outside holding the light to await your return, either.”

I looked at Luna with a smile, and asked, “Are you getting sick of waiting?”

‘Nier has always been the one holding a light to await my return, but since neither of them was here right now, Luna became the one who waited for me holding the light. Honestly speaking, I really like having someone wait for me. Seeing a light waiting for me whenever I returned to the outer court at night showered me with a soothing bliss.’

“No. I would never.” Luna shook her head. She then checked left and right to ensure nobody was around before giving me a gentle back hug. With her head rested on my back, she softly continued, “I feel that you belong to me alone when I wait for you, like that... I become the only one waiting for you...”

“Luna...”

“But Mr Castell did not return with Her Majesty this time.”

Luna cut me off and didn’t even give me a chance to turn around to hug her. From that position, she mentioned Castell’s absence.

I nodded and replied, “Yeah, I was surprised Castell didn’t come back. Perhaps Castell did something wrong to anger Her Majesty.”

“Mr Castell has been Her Majesty’s personal attendant for about ten years, right? How could he do something that would make Her Majesty unhappy? I think that it might be because Her Majesty ordered him to stay... Maybe Her Majesty no longer likes Castell. For a personal attendant, losing Her Majesty’s favour is the same as completely losing one’s life.”

“How could Castell be abandoned by Her Majesty?”

“This is a mutual feeling we share as personal servants!”

‘I’m a little reluctant to believe it. Her Majesty doesn’t trust Castell at an ordinary level. I don’t know what would happen for Her Majesty to no longer

trust Castell. But there can only be one, and that is that Castell overstepped his boundaries by either digging his hands into military affairs or politics. That's something Her Majesty forbids.'

'I don't believe Castell would do that sort of thing, though. He's a very wise guy, so there's no way he'd dig himself a hole. From Castell's perspective, Her Majesty's trust is what's most important to him. I'm sure that Castell wouldn't involve himself with military and political affairs.'

"However... Your Majesty..."

Luna released me. I turned my head around to look at her. She looked at me with eagerness, but also some anxiousness, and asked me, "Your Majesty, would you one day abandon me ...? Would the day where you do not... like me anymore come and replace me with a new personal servant?"

"No."

I looked at Luna and resolutely shook my head. I stroked her head and sincerely explained, "Haven't I told you many times already? You're my only personal servant. If you're no longer with me, I'll just be without a personal servant. I will never abandon you. You're very cute, Luna, so I won't dislike you."

Luna looked at me with tears in her eyes; but, a blissful smile surfaced on her face. She gently grabbed hold of my hand and softly responded, "I am so glad to have been saved by you... I am so glad to be able to always be by your side... Your Majesty... you are so gentle..."

I smiled then pulled my hand back and told her, "I'll be back early tonight. Luna, leave a light on for me."

Luna responded with a firm nod, and then replied with a smile, "Uhm. I will wait for your return, Your Majesty."

'There honestly isn't much work today. I just need to confirm some preparations in the palace, so that any damages or losses noted after the Empress returns won't have to do with me. While I'm at it, I'll sort out how the Valkyries will manage the members of the vassal states in the city. They're managing them only in name. In reality, they're keeping tabs on them.'

'Up until now, I still don't know what the scheme behind the scenes is. Therefore, I need them to gather information from those around the lords.'

"Onii-sama, do you have any thoughts about what we are investigating?"

I shook my head. I looked at Freya and candidly replied, "No."

Freya looked at me with a gaze as if my response was a matter of course, but also similarly to a mother looking at a naughty child. She then nodded, "That is most like you. Onii-sama, I have an idea, though."

"What's the idea?"

"We ask a few people from the red-light district to go to where they are staying. Men may not speak about many things; the strong-willed fighter types who won't speak even when physically tortured. But, they will spill everything when the beauty in their arms, nonetheless. A man lying on his back in bed is when he is most defenceless."

'I understand what Freya is thinking now. She's saying to send some women from the red-light district to them, to see if they'll speak when they're indulging in the beauty of the women. If a woman alone isn't enough, we can just add alcohol into the mix. I think they'll divulge everything under the influence of alcohol.'

"Let's do that then. I'll leave it with you."

I nodded and Freya puffed her chest out proudly.

'She's just a kid but she hopes that I depend on her. She's the same as my moms... It gives off the old-woman-acting-cute vibe.'

"Ah, Your Majesty, Miss Freya."

As we just finished discussing the matter, we saw Alice come out from another side. Behind her were a few people who came out with her. I took a look at them.

'I seem to recognise them. One of them is the fatty from the conservative faction. I think he was from the financial department.'

He saluted me when he saw me then left.

I was curious as to what Alice was doing, but she is Her Majesty's personal attendant.

'What she's doing has nothing to do with me, except I can't figure out what a personal attendant would see a finance minister for.'

"Are you two doing something?"

I never expected Alice to ask me in such a direct manner. I nodded, "We were just discussing the fight the Valkyries got into and came up with an idea. I think we'll find clues soon."

Alice narrowed her eyes. She then revealed a smile, "Your Majesty, are you serious about investigating the case? I think it would be better for you to leave it to Her Majesty to investigate."

"But Her Majesty is absent at the moment, isn't she? I'll handle this case. I believe I'll find out the truth. I can just pass the results of my investigation on to Her Majesty afterwards."

I nodded and continued on proudly, "I think I'll be able to get to the bottom of it before the full-moon night. At latest, it'll take me until a day or two after the full-moon night."

Alice looked at me as she replied in a tone full of pride, "Oh...? Well, good luck then, Your Majesty... But you only have about three days until the full-moon night, right...? You must be careful that night. I will be sure to tightly guard the outer court. I shall forbid anyone from approaching."

I nodded, "In that case, I shall leave everything with you, Alice."

"Think nothing of it. It is my duty, my most important duty..."

Ch. 28

Among several people seated at a table, a small silhouette that looked as though it was standing on a chair looked at those seated below, "If you're going to do it, you must do it as soon as you can."

“Looked” isn’t quite the right word since the entire room was pitch black without a light in the room. The individuals in the room weren’t very visible, so it was impossible to identify the individuals.

An individual resentfully complained, “It appears that the previous incident has raised the Prince’s alertness. It is all the Valkyries’ fault. We could have used the opportunity to go all out on the Prince, but their mistake wasted the opportunity to capture him.”

“The Valkyries can’t be blamed for it. Not even the captain would have the right to stop the Valkyries in that situation. At best, the Valkyries’ captain is only Her Majesty’s representative, not someone who can command the Valkyries directly. Their disrespect for the Royal Palace was the equivalent of an insult hurled at Her Majesty; therefore, they wouldn’t have stopped even if their captain commanded them to.”

“Whatever the case, it seems that option is not viable. Just as importantly, the Empress has decided to pass the throne to the Prince. We think that only Her Majesty has the right to be the Empress. The throne cannot be handed to a brat still wet behind the ears. Therefore, if we can’t make him lose his right, we’ll just control him directly.”

One of the individuals solemnly agreed, “Uhm, let’s do that. But according to what you said, His Majesty will be extremely weak on the full-moon night every month, so let’s take action on that day then.”

“Uhm, let’s do that then. At present, there are only three days to go until the next full moon. It’s worrisome that we haven’t obtained our weapons yet, though.”

“It’ll be fine. Even without weapons, I believe that the Valkyries who support me will be able to defeat all those standing in our way. We don’t need weapons. We have Her Majesty’s loyalty. That is our honour, our soul and also our weapon.”

“The Valkyries know about this?”

“No, not yet. However, I think I will need to recruit some members when the time comes. The Valkyries will support me, apart from maybe some, who won’t agree. The Valkyrie squad is a mess because of the Prince. They’re no longer as

pure as they once were. Some of the Valkyries are now supporting the Prince because of Nier and Shusia, so there may very well be an internal fight between the Valkyries.”

“What are the chances of victory?”

“Very high, I would say, as they’re bound to be fewer in numbers. Plus, there won’t be many soldiers who will step up while the Prince is incapacitated. The Valkyries are a squad that was trained and formed for Her Majesty’s sake; hence, they are unlikely to sacrifice their lives for him.”

“How about his guard unit?”

“They’re a bother. In the desert in the south, they killed several times more people than their own numbers.”

“They suffered severe wounds in the desert and are currently recuperating in the North, so they won’t be able to make it down here. There’s currently only one team with the Prince, and that’s the Valkyries. Their sword instructor Nier and the Shadow Squad captain Lucia are both with Her Majesty and Her Highness. Subsequently, there is no one around the Prince who can fight.”

“It looks as though it’ll be a simple job. We just need to capture the Prince, and our matter will be all over. And it’s as if the heavens will so. We’ve got nothing but opportunities.”

“But the most important thing is the Prince on the full-moon night.”

Just when everybody let out a sigh of relief, the owner of the small silhouette spoke out. She softly added, “Do not forget that His Majesty can fight, especially on full-moon nights. His elven blood empowers him with a very frightening power on full-moon nights, so we will be facing a wild beast in pain.”

“But didn’t you just say that we were going to capture him on the full-moon night?”

“I was saying to not be rash!” The owner of the small silhouette cut him off in an irritated tone, and then coldly said, “Let Luna suck out all of his mana first, so that he becomes weak. Don’t let anything happen to us before the full-moon night. We must wait for Luna to come out before we launch our operation. If we’re early, the berserk Prince will obliterate the palace, so we must not act

ahead of schedule.”

“I get it. We get it. But there’s another important thing, and that is, can we not kill him right away, but, instead, bring him before us and then discuss how to deal with him?”

“You want to quit?!”

The small individual cut off another individual. The individual hesitantly shook his head and replied, “No. We must do this; nevertheless, we must act with a plan. At least, we shouldn’t kill him right away. We should at least consider the consequences. It’s not too late to kill him after we report it to Her Majesty.”

“That’s right. We’ve already decided to do this, so we don’t need to worry needlessly in the short-term. He has to be killed in the end anyway, and therefore you don’t need to worry.”

After hearing the explanation from the two, the owner of the small silhouette sat back down and grouchyly dabbed her head with her finger. After a moment of silence, she said, “We must kill the Prince; that’s not debatable. Also, remember, we are only revolting against the Prince, not the Empress. If you do something that is detrimental to the Empress, I’ll rip all of your heads off just as I did with that stupid old friend of mine.”

“We understand. We are here because we are loyal to Her Majesty. We will not hold any ulterior motives toward Her Majesty.”

“That better be the case, or else you’ll regret it. I can’t trust anyone now. Ten years of adoration couldn’t earn me the loyalty of a man, so what else can I believe in? I, however, believe that even without him by my side, Her Majesty still has countless of other loyal people around her. Let’s leave now. I think that the Prince should’ve finished dinner by now. Let him have a moment with his maid. He’s not going to get a chance to see her again, after all.”

The few of them stood up. The leader of the group pulled the door open. They were in a small room, but the room was unexpectedly located in the inner sections of the Royal Palace. The lights outside had just been lit up. The Royal Palace interior was cold and empty, for Her Majesty had taken off with a team. All they could hear was the voices around the corner.

“Let’s do that then. I’ll leave it with you.”

“Ah, Your Majesty, Miss Freya.”

Alice looked at the two who walked up to her and forced herself to not reveal her look of disdain for him. She did her best to greet the Prince in front of her with a smile. The reason she deliberately avoided meeting him was to avoid revealing her look of disdain for him. She had to keep her hostility toward him hidden from him, or her plan might get exposed.

“In that case, I shall leave everything with you, Alice.”

“It’s nothing. It is my duty, my most important duty.....”

‘As expected, he’s still that Prince who’s always passing responsibilities to others, useless at everything and delegating jobs to others, even trusting his life in the hands of others. How can someone, like him, become an Emperor?’

‘Let me show him what the ending for a useless Emperor is.’

Ch. 29

“What are you looking at, Nier?”

“Ah, Your Majesty!”

Nier quickly went to stand up, but the Empress waved her hand then pressed it on Nier’s shoulder and said, “You don’t need to get up, Nier. Your well-being is more important right now. Are you feeling all right? If there are any problems, you must notify the doctor. If you can’t handle it, I’ll, personally, send you back.”

“I am all right. I am well. You do not need to worry, Your Majesty.” Nier shook her head, and then sat down to the side before gently stroking her tummy. The Empress sat down next to her and stroked Nier’s hand with an affectionate smile. She asked, “You just looked in the Prince’s direction, didn’t you? What’s wrong? Do you miss him?”

“Uhm... Tonight is a full-moon night so I am slightly worried for him...”

“It’ll be all right. Luna is with him. I don’t like that elf, but she can help him on full-moon nights.”

Elizabeth stroked Nier’s head, and then gave her a kiss on her forehead. In an affectionate tone, she said, “I am most worried about you right now, Nier. You are pregnant with my son’s child, who is also my grandchild. I never experienced raising a child. I’m eagerly waiting for the day your child is born. You must let me have a good look when your child is born.”

“Uhm, but... I will definitely give birth later than that woman by a bit.”

“That doesn’t matter. I don’t care about that sort of stuff. I believe my son won’t mind either. Take care of yourself, Nier. I remember you came with me for the last hunting event, right? You came as my bodyguard that time, though. This time you’re here as a member of the royal family. How do you feel?”

Nier shyly smiled. She then looked at Her Majesty and replied, “I am very grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to be by His Majesty’s side. Honestly, I do not feel a certain way about money or status... As a matter of fact, I do not know what to buy nor do I know how my life will be different. Instead, of saying that I am a member of the royal family, I consider myself His Majesty’s wife.....”

“That makes sense. You were a Valkyrie in the past, after all.” Elizabeth gave her a pat on her shoulder then sighed and looked outside. She lamented, “Perhaps it was wrong for me to refuse to let you be with my son back then. You wouldn’t have had to go through that if I wasn’t selfish and prejudiced against you and had let you be with my son.”

“It does not matter, Your Majesty. I never felt I was suffering. After all, that was also the most important phase His Majesty and I had to go through to be together. If His Majesty did not put his life on the line to rescue me that time, I would not be aware of His Majesty’s love for me. It was precisely because I saw His Majesty’s expression that I had the courage to confess my feelings.”

“Hehe, I’m surprised to hear that my fearless Nier was once afraid. Love can truly make one happy. I experienced it back then and understand that heart throbbing feeling. I dared to fight with anyone back then, but didn’t even dare to give my husband a biscuit.” Elizabeth chuckled softly as she recalled her

memories. She then stood up, “It’s getting late now. I won’t torture your ears with my old stories. Nier, rest up early. My son is definitely safest in the royal capital so you don’t need to worry.”

“Uhm, goodnight Your Majesty.”

“Goodnight.”

Nier didn’t know why the Empress shared her past with her. The Empress had always kept a lid on her past. She never once brought up her past, nor did she ever talk about her and Inard, but she took the initiative to share it this time. Maybe it was because Elizabeth had that feeling like she was in love again.

=====

Freya looked at the beauties in front of her, frowned and asked, “Did you find out anything?”

She doesn’t actually think well of the women, probably because they reminded her of her past. Wherever avoidable, she never wanted to recall her past. While it wasn’t as dark as Luna’s, it wasn’t a happy memory, that’s for sure.

She was very reluctant to know these people, but it was her Onii-sama’s order so she had to complete the task.

“This is all we have found out.”

The woman handed Freya a bag. Freya opened it. Inside were all random things that gave her a headache. The women were uneducated, and they were idiots. Freya assumed that there wasn’t anything useful. Ninety percent of the items were likely to be pointless things.

Freya took the items out one by one. They were all random things. Though there was a document, it was a pointless document. Everything else was chest crests and the sort. Other than being able to prove their identities, they were otherwise useless items. There were even gold coins you could find anywhere. The items were truly useless.

Freya soon realised how foolish her idea was. If the Shadow Squad or the monarch’s spies were the ones who investigated it, they’d have something to

work with. Unfortunately, trusting these women, who probably don't know how to read, was futile. The bag wasn't filled with ninety percent trash. One-hundred percent of the contents were trash.

Freya passed back the bag. She let out a heavy sigh, "The things you found are completely useless. Three days and you didn't find a single thing worth anything. You didn't even manage to get anything out of them. I need to report back today. Are you expecting me to return empty handed?"

"Actually, we still have one more thing..."

One of the women hesitated for a moment. She then took out an item from the pouch that she always had on her. It was a small golden box. She hesitated for a moment and explained, "I was actually planning to sell this, so... if you are willing to offer a better price, I'll give it to you."

Freya hesitated for a moment. Her expression suddenly changed when she saw the small box. There was a wing print on the box.

'That's the Valkyries' small box. A Valkyries' small box would never be found outside, so why was it with those vassal states?!'

"Deal! I'll buy it from you at three-times the price, but you must give me the box right now!!"

Freya placed her wallet into the woman's hands and quickly took the box to open it. The powder inside suddenly burst into the air. Before Freya could react, her legs went limp, knocking her out on the ground.

"Don't blame us. They offered us a higher price..."

The women looked at Freya, who was lying on the ground. They giggled amongst each other before searching her to take all of her valuables. They then stripped her, dragged over to dump her in a bin and finally put the lid on.

=====

I looked at the red sun going down. I placed my cup down and said, "It seems that Freya hasn't returned."

"It will be all right. Miss Freya will be fine. Your Majesty, it is night time now so you should return to your room first."

“Uhm, all right.” I nodded then stood up. My body was aching. I walked to my room. I looked at Alice by the door and thanked her, “Thank you, Alice.”

“You need not thank me. It is my duty.”

Ch. 30

“Luna...”

Luna leaned in toward me, gently touched my cheek and tenderly apologised, “Sorry, Your Majesty...”

Maybe it was because we were always together that Luna started having more and more mana, leading to her looking sexier on the full-moon night. Full-moon nights are when elves are at their peak so naturally, they’re at their most beautiful, as well.

“Mm... Luna...”

“There is nobody else, Your Majesty... It is fine, Your Majesty. Nobody is around. Nobody is around. Let us do it again as we did in the desert, Your Majesty.”

A fragrance went down into my lungs. Luna’s passionate kiss blocked all of my senses. Her fragrance entered my mouth and rushed to my organs comparably to a heatwave. Her misty eyes contained her passionate love for me. It was as though her entire body was a red loving heart. Her hands swam across every inch of my skin.

I became aroused by her attack from all sides. I, too, am an elf. When I am in the most pain on full-moon nights, it should be when Luna is most aroused. Luna’s tongue was in my mouth desperately sucking my saliva out while exchanging her saliva with mine. I couldn’t breathe anymore, but my mouth was filled with Luna’s sweet breath. I tightly hugged Luna and rubbed her body as if I wanted to roll her up and eat her. There was no love in the moment.

‘The rationality of elves is weakest under the moonlight. Our ancestors’ blessings need to surpass our habits we have formed by far, after all. That

characteristic is precisely what allowed elves to continue to prosper until now. Elves are supposed to be by their loved one's side on full-moon nights. I, however, wasn't by my lovers' sides right now. Lucia isn't here. And even if she was, I can't go down on Lucia so I've only got Luna.'

'However, we don't have any love between us. It's just our instinctive urges driving us.'

I tightly hugged Luna and we felt each other's warmth. Luna may have had an unbearable past, but I could see how skilled and sexy she was. Seeing Luna, who was on my hips with an infatuated gaze and eerie smile, made me just want to pounce her. While suffering from unbearable pain and wild-passionate arousal, I truly wanted to hug Luna forever in this moment.

'I did suffer from pain this full-moon night, but having Luna by my side made me feel particularly great. Normally, Mom would be by my side and I wouldn't do anything to my mom. With Luna, however, I could unleash myself on her. Luna wasn't an ordinary elf, either, as she could feel the pain I gave her.'

'She felt the same way I felt; the two of us were in pain and happy tonight.'

"Your Majesty..."

Luna panted as she sprawled out on my chest. My vision was now hazy, and I didn't have the strength to do anything other than hug Luna.

Luna looked into my eyes and clasped my face gently, "Will you abandon me?"

I looked at her. Her eyes that were clear as the moon shined in the dark night sky similarly to the brightest crystals in this world.

I looked at her eyes. I slowly reached my hand out to clasp her face and firmly shook my head.

"... No. Never."

Luna looked at me and brushed her hair aside. She then leaned her head down and kissed me on my lips. The moon was now high in the sky, but I was no longer in any pain.

'I just need to get my mana out of my body and I'll be fine. I must admit that

this is the fastest way to drain my mana. I couldn't use this method in the past, though.'

Luna looked at me. While drawing small circles on my chest with a smile, she asked, "Do you... want to do it again? Not to relieve you of your pain this time, but out of love. Your Majesty, I can only tell you I love you at times, like this. Only at times like this can I be with you out of love. I think that I will only have this one chance in my life."

"Uhm."

I nodded and gently hugged Luna. Luna followed me and lay down on my chest. She looked at my lips and went to kiss them...

BOOM!!

Suddenly, a loud explosion went off, causing the hanging lights overhead to sway dangerously and even causing two candles to drop to the ground. I quickly sat up; but nonetheless, due to my weak condition, I dropped back down. I'm extremely weak once my mana is drained on full-moon nights. I was virtually totally immobilised this time. Luna vigilantly sat up then quickly crawled to the window to look down.

'The sound of the explosion came from nearby the outer court, so it came from within the Royal Palace grounds!'

'What happened? Could it be that the guards' gunpowder exploded? Where are the Valkyries? Where are my Valkyries?'

"Alice! Alice!"

Luna got dressed while shouting toward the outside. However, even after she finished getting dressed, there was no response from the corridor. Luna wore a very serious expression. She walked up to me and gave me a kiss on my cheeks, "Your Majesty, I am going to go out and take a look to see what happened. Before I return, do not come out. You must not come out, okay? Your Majesty, do not come out."

"Uhm. Be careful."

'Honestly, I wasn't worried. At least I wasn't yet, because I believed the

Valkyries were fine. I knew well how formidable the Valkyries are. As long as they're inside the outer court with the palace guards, I'm certain that they can defeat anyone.'

'I was clueless at the time. I didn't have the foggiest idea as to what had happened.'

Luna pushed the door open. She turned her head around to look at me; then she revealed a smile to reassure me, "Your Majesty, please do not worry. I do not think it is anything serious. However, do not come out before I return. Do not move. I will be back. After all, we still need to do it one more time."

I smiled and told her to take care, "Be careful out there, Luna."

"All right, Your Majesty."

'It was the same as how Luna told me goodnight every night. The exact same. There was no determined farewell or reluctance to part or the calmness before facing danger. It was a simple response just as per usual. Yes, just as per usual. Even the light shining in on Luna's shadow on the door was the same as usual. Luna's smile, her posture, her everything... it was all the same.'

'Yes. All the same.'

'I had no idea, and I don't think I ever would've expected what happened thereafter...'

Ch. 31

Alice looked at her Valkyries below as she shouted, "So, what are you going to do? Are you going to support Her Majesty or His Majesty? Valkyries, it is time to put your loyalty to the test. Her Majesty gave up everything for this empire, and she saved us. But, now there's a brat who's still wet behind the ears with elven blood in his veins no less, tricking Her Majesty. Her Majesty's empire cannot be handed to a useless brat. This is a great empire. Our brave warriors' blood was spilt on every inch of land of this empire. This is the warriors' nation, the home of heroes. We cannot let a brat who hasn't even gone to war succeed this place.

Our bloody-battle history is our glorious and honourable past. We cannot let an obnoxious brat turn our glory and honour into shame! Our blood cannot be spilt in vain. If you are loyal to Her Majesty and if you still remember the blood your comrades spilt, then now is the time to display your loyalty!”

The Valkyries listened to their captain’s speech with maniacal loyalty in their eyes. Their most lofty wish was to loyally serve Her Majesty. Though they didn’t know what the Prince had done, if he threatened her rule then they were acting in Her Majesty’s interest and loyally serving!

“His Majesty has done nothing wrong!”

One Valkyrie spoke out with vehemence. The other Valkyries turned their head back around to look at her. The Valkyrie loudly said to Alice, “His Majesty and Her Majesty have a very good relationship. He is Her Majesty’s only child and the future crown prince. We cannot whimsically harm him. Further, Her Majesty ordered us to protect him. Captain, your order contradicts Her Majesty’s. I cannot follow your order!”

Alice calmly looked at the Valkyrie, who spoke to her, and questioned, “Let me ask you then, what if this Crown Prince isn’t worthy of becoming the Emperor?”

“That is Her Majesty’s business. I have no right to interfere with that. However, if Her Majesty has not retracted her order, then that means His Majesty is still qualified to be the Crown Prince. We cannot harm Her Majesty’s child. Furthermore, we have not received orders from Her Majesty! We are Valkyries. We only obey Her Majesty’s orders!”

The Valkyrie spoke in a loud voice. She then looked at her fellow Valkyries, who she saw as sisters, and encouraged, “Please calm down everyone. This is not Her Majesty’s order. Our order is to protect His Majesty. What our captain has said does not align with the rules and regulations. We must await Her Majesty’s orders before we do anything or...”

She didn’t get to finish because she lost the ability to speak. She blankly looked at Alice who was in front of her, and then her body dropped to the ground, sprawled out similarly to a wooden puppet with her neck floppy as a noodle. Alice threw her corpse aside then turned to look at the other Valkyries

and exclaim, “Traitors must be punished. We are eliminating His Majesty for Her Majesty’s sake. Although I don’t have Her Majesty’s order, Her Majesty will understand once we eliminate this conniving vassal. Valkyries, did you see what happens to traitors? This is a shameless traitor. She is no longer living for Her Majesty. Her Majesty gave her everything, but she runs away when faced with a crisis. She went and gave someone else her sympathy. Shameless traitor!! I believe that there won’t be a second traitor among you. All right. We are heading out now. Kill the Prince and our mission will be complete! Sisters, the mission is very simple. Kill the Prince and everything will be over, the same way you kill others!”

The Valkyries looked at the corpse on the ground. After a moment of silence, they drew their swords at their hips one after another and loudly responded, “Roger!”

=====

Current time at the hunting camp.

“Your Majesty, Castell seeks an audience with you.”

“Castell? Didn’t I tell you to stay at Troy City?”

The Empress ignored the voice behind her. She sighed then placed down the book in her hand. She spun around and said, “Castell, I...”

She widened her eyes as she caught sight of Castell, whose face was white as a sheet and had to lean on a pillar to stay on his feet while trembling. His right hand was firmly pressed on his abdomen. The amount of blood that was on that hand was shocking. The blade in his abdomen was pinching into his skin. If he moved it, his blood would gush out.

Castell smiled helplessly when he saw Her Majesty’s shocked reaction. He slowly slid down the pillar and sat on the ground. He softly remarked, “I finally... made it... Your Majesty... Castell... I... have something to report...”

“Don’t speak! Don’t speak!! Doctor!! Wait... Vyvyan!!! Vyvyan!!”

The Empress threw her book in her hand aside and rushed over to hug Castell. Castell leaned on her arm and desperately tried to look up at Her Majesty’s panicked look and trembling lips. He softly said, “Your Majesty... Your Majesty...”

let me finish... Let me finish first..."

"Don't speak for now!!"

The Empress reacted overbearingly by covering his mouth. She looked frantic as she yelled, "Vyvyan!! Vyvyan!! Vyvyan, come out here! Come out!!"

"Your Majesty... His Majesty... His Majesty... is in danger... he is in danger... Alice... It is all..."

Castell struggled to look at Elizabeth. He coughed loudly. His eyes started to close. Elizabeth grabbed his hand and desperately shook him.

"Go... save... His... Majesty..."

Castell's eyes gradually shut and his voice became quieter and quieter. He blankly looked at the Empress and fought for dear life as he uttered those final words...

"Don't die... don't die!! Don't die! Castell! I'm begging you... please... don't die... Don't diiiieeee!!"

Elizabeth tightly hugged Castell in her arms as her tears landed on his face, washing off the dirt and blood on his face. Elizabeth hugged her personal attendant while kneeling on the ground. She hugged her personal attendant that had been by her side for ten years and wailed.

"Your... Majesty... do not cry... your... your... expression... does not suit... you..."

Castell struggled to open his eyes. He looked at her with his now virtually lifeless eyes. He looked as though he was smiling, yet not.

The last time the Empress cried was when her dog died. This time, she was crying for him, which meant he held the same significance as the dog to her.

That was enough. To be able to be loved by Her Majesty for ever and even die in her arms was blissful as a dream. He had fulfilled his every purpose.

Devoting his loyalty to Her Majesty and dying in her arms.

"Don't die! Don't die! I order you! Castell!!! Don't die! Don't die!!!"

Elizabeth violently shook Castell; nevertheless, Castell didn't get angry. His

hand he had kept on the dagger the entire time finally ran out of strength, and he let go of it. His ring covered in blood rolled on the ground. Elizabeth looked at the ring. That was the gift she rewarded him ten years ago.

“Sorry... I... cannot fulfil that order... but...”

The Empress covered Castell’s sobs. He looked at the ceiling with his lifeless eyes. He used his last breath to sincerely speak one last time with consolation.

“Your Majesty... Did... Did... I make your... cage... a bit more comfortable...?”

“Don’t die!! Castell! Don’t die!! I’m very happy! Very happy! You made me very happy! You did! I’m very happy to have you, so don’t die!! Don’t die!!”

“Really...? I am... glad then...”

A final faint smile appeared on the young man’s face. His hands dropped down powerlessly. His index finger gently touched the ring on the ground that had been covered in some dust.

However, he couldn’t pick it up again...

‘I really want cherry tomatoes again.’

‘The sweet cherry tomato and the sour cherry tomato... I really wanted to try them again...’

‘I’m so glad...’

‘To be able to be by the Empress’s side...’

‘To be able to make her cage a little more comfortable for her...’

‘I really, really, really want...’

Ch. 32

“You look after him, I’m going back.”

“You stop right there!”

Vyvyan grabbed Elizabeth with one hand. She furiously glared at her with her blood-red eyes and in a deep voice roared, “What exactly happened? Why did

this happen? Why does something happen to my son every single time he's at your Royal Capital?!"

Elizabeth pushed Vyvyan's hand off, and then looked at her and roared back the same way, "I don't know! I don't know why this happened, either!! Alice is absolutely loyal! I trust her! I still trust her even now. But my son is in danger now, so I have no time to explain things to you. I'm going back now!"

"He's my son!" Vyvyan pointed at Castell by the side and said, "I've already repaired his damaged organs, so he won't die. He's not my personal attendant or my vassal. I've already shown him the utmost magnanimity. You stay here. I'm going to, personally, rescue my son!"

Elizabeth scratched her head as she looked at Vyvyan and asked, "Can you teleport there?"

It was a full-moon night; therefore, Vyvyan could save even Castell, who was almost dead. She could, indeed, teleport into the Royal Capital within an instant to resolve this crisis.

"I can't. I need a target to teleport to! This is my first time at your Royal Capital. How am I supposed to remember your things in order to use teleportation?!"

Vyvyan anxiously grabbed her hair and said, "My son hasn't used his necklace, so I have no destination to teleport to. I can only rush back. I'm going to use wind magic to fly back there. I should be able to reach him in ten minutes."

"Let's do that, then. I'm coming, too."

Elizabeth nodded. Vyvyan nodded back then coldly said, "But I need to warn you ahead of time that I don't care who or what in your city it happens to be; if they are a threat to my son, I'll destroy them for sure. I don't care who she is or what she means to you. From my perspective, she's just an enemy who wants to harm my son, and I'm very crazy tonight. You should understand that, right?"

Elizabeth looked into Vyvyan's eyes without any fear and replied, "There's only one thing I can't promise you, and that is my personal bodyguard. She has served me for over ten years. She would never betray me. She must have her reasons for doing this. I absolutely believe that she has a reason. So if you see

her, call me. I'll question her face to face! I personally arranged for a squad of Valkyries to stand guard outside my son's outer court. There's no way they can defeat Alice, but they can buy us some time."

"I can't promise that she'll live until your arrival. If something happens to my son, I'll have your entire Royal Capital pay with their lives! You have my word!"

Vyvyan indifferently waved her hand, and the winds from all directions seemingly gathered below her feet similarly a cloud of wind. Vyvyan then aggressively pulled her hand back and remarked, "Lucia and Nier are here."

Nier entered the tent. She looked at their stern expressions and hesitated for a moment before asking, "Your Majesty, Your Highness, what happened?"

"My son is in trouble."

Elizabeth gave a simple response. Lucia lingered for a moment before looking toward Her Highness. Vyvyan nodded. Lucia took in a deep breath; then she calmly said, "Your Highness, please share a portion of your mana with me. I want to use the wind elves to fly back. I, too, want to go and save my husband."

"Me, too."

Nier stepped up. She looked at Lucia then Elizabeth. She sincerely said, "Something must have happened with Alice, I presume. As long as I can fight face-to-face with Alice, I will definitely be able to rescue my husband."

Vyvyan looked at the two of them. Lucia touched her abdomen and exclaimed, "Regardless of what the situation is, I won't give up His Highness. If something happens to His Highness, then I will die next to him. I am determined to walk with His Highness even if it is hell we are headed to! I cannot stay in the rear when my husband is in trouble. I would die from worry!"

"Same for me! I will not allow anyone to harm my husband. If she wants to kill my husband, I will kill her, and then accompany my husband to the other side!"

Nier looked at Elizabeth and firmly said, "I shall go and change into my Valkyrie uniform now. I am a Valkyrie and also His Majesty's bodyguard. Your Majesty, you did give me the order to protect His Majesty; thus, I shall continue to do so forever! Now is an opportunity for me to protect him!"

The two mothers exchanged glances. Vyvyan then chuckled and asked, “I can’t talk them out of it. How about you?”

“Let’s go together, then. There’s not much time left to be arguing about this. Nier, you must be careful. You’re not in the same condition as you were in the past. Don’t push yourself. Just stick with me.”

The Empress stroked Nier’s head. Nier tore her dress open then grabbed a sword from a guard standing to the side. She took in a deep breath and changed her expression to her cold look that resembled a blade that hasn’t been drawn in a long time, but maintained its sharp edge.

“Lucky I never slacked on my training.”

Lucia looked at the sword in her hand and revealed a consoled smile. She had always been training hard, so that she could kill Nier in battle. She continued to train hard to achieve that goal. As such, she was very confident in herself this time. She was determined to rescue her husband no matter what this time.

=====

Currently outside the entrance of the outer court.

“Captain Alice.”

“Move. Let me in.”

The Valkyries looked at Alice with a cold look and refused to make way. They continued standing at the door of the outer court and explained, “An explosion went off nearby not long ago, so the outer court is off bounds and nobody is permitted entry.”

“Insolence! I am your captain!”

“Her Majesty ordered us to guard the outer court. We will not let anyone through while it is still sealed off.” The Valkyries looked at Alice, who brought Valkyries with her. They drew their swords and asked, “Are you going to force your way through, Captain Alice? Her Majesty ordered us to protect His Majesty. What are you trying to do?”

“What am I trying to do? Punish traitors! Sisters! Charge!”

“Enemy attack!!”

The Valkyries loudly shouted, and then all of the Valkyries inside and outside the outer court engaged in a killing spree. A big group of sisters killed each other without a hint of hesitation. Flesh flew through the air as they fought. Their battle was intense. Not one of them backed down, and not one begged for mercy. All that could be heard were the Valkyries' swords clashing and their roars.

"Now... Now..."

Alice huffed and puffed. She wiped the blood off her face, and then stomped on a Valkyrie's head, causing it to burst as an air balloon would. She stood amidst the corpses and walked through the river of blood. She looked up. She looked to the empty outer court with a crazed murderous intent and smile.

All of the Valkyries guarding the outer court were dead. Nobody could stop her.

Nobody. Absolutely nobody.

"Sisters, advance. See that? Victory is right at our fingertips."

Ch. 33

"Hnng..."

After some time had passed, Freya slowly opened her eyes. There was nothing around, but candles used at sunset. In front of her was a stone wall of an ordinary room. She had a faint fragrance on her. She was covered with a soft piece of cloth. She sat up at a loss for what to do. She looked at the flame on the candle on the bedside table.

It was as though nothing happened. Actually, not even she knew what happened. It wasn't until a while later when she slowly regained her consciousness that she figured out what happened.

'I should be naked in a rubbish bin right now. How am I here?'

She shook her head and tossed those problems to the back of her mind. Enraged, she clenched her teeth as she felt angry at herself for falling for such a

sinister plot. She fell for it as soon as she saw this. If she had kept calm then this wouldn't have happened.

She had to hurry back now. Her brother was in trouble. Big trouble. There was the Valkyries' box. Her secret activities were discovered. Only one Valkyrie knew what she was investigating, and that was Alice. Frankly, she didn't interact much with Alice, and she admittedly never suspected her. But if she was the mastermind then her brother was in danger. If Alice attacked him when he was weak on a full-moon night, then there she basically had a free kill.

'I have to head back. I have to head back to save my brother. He's my only family in this world, though technically speaking, he isn't my family member. He's the only person who treats me nicely in the entire world. When I was living in the world where I was treated as a tool and a toy, he was the only one who brought me honey cherry tomatoes.'

'I thought it was just a deal at first, but my brother genuinely treated me well as if I'm his biological sister. I've forgotten when I started genuinely working for the royal family. All I wanted was to give her best for my brother's smile. All that I wanted was my brother's praise.'

'I will never forget the warmth of my brother's palm transferred to my head, and the warmth that touched my heart. I'm willing to give up anything for my brother. I don't care in the least if anything was done to me just now. All that's on my mind is rushing back to her brother's side. If death was what awaits me, then I want to die holding my brother's hand tightly.'

Freya struggled to get up. Her two legs immediately gave in. Had it not been for her being able to lean onto the bedside cupboard in time, she would've fell to the ground. The cup of water on the cupboard dropped to the ground, thereby shattering it to pieces.

She heard footsteps from outside that quickly stopped. The person who approached seemed to hesitate for a second before gently knocking on the door. In a calm and polite voice, he asked, "Umm... Miss? Are you up? Can I come in? Are you hurt anywhere?"

Freya desperately tried to stand up and panted as she hostilely threatened, "Come in and I'll kill you."

The individual outside paused for a moment, and then hopelessly told her, “You don’t have to react that way. I was the one who saved you from a group of tramps... No, no, I’m not asking for any repayments, nor do I intend to make you do anything. I just want to know how you’re feeling. If you’ve recovered, I’ll send you home.”

Freya froze for a moment. She never expected him to be so polite. He picked up an unconscious girl that was nude and didn’t violate her in any way. Instead, he helped her wash and get her clean clothes; plus, he didn’t get angry at her when she threatened him. It would appear that she met a good person.

Freya toned down her voice, “Ah... Sorry. Please come in. I apologise for misunderstanding you.”

“It’s nothing. But may I ask why you passed out? If you were set up by somebody, please notify the guards.”

He let out a breath of relief then hesitated for a moment before pushing the door open. As he spoke, he poked his head in. He got a shock when he saw Freya half-kneeling on the ground, so he quickly rushed over to help her up, “You have not yet recovered, have you? Please stay calm. It is fine for you to rest here for the night. Ah, you need not worry. I will not be home at night. I am a guard of the city. I need to go on patrols.”

Freya looked at the young man’s blue eyes and light-blond hair, “Take me to the palace... now. There’s no time to waste... Take me to the palace.”

The young man had a very fresh appearance. Though he wasn’t as good looking as her brother, he certainly wasn’t ugly. You wouldn’t be able to tell that he was a guard. His pair of blue eyes was clear as the sky and contained the naivety of a young man. He wasn’t old. He had probably just become an adult, yet was still the same as a child.

“The palace?!”

She frightened him. He looked at Freya stupefied and stuttered, “The palace... The palace is not some place we can come and go from as we please... Carelessly entering the palace will get you killed. Are you a maid in the palace or a lady-in-waiting? Do you have any proof on you?”

“I’m His Majesty’s younger sister!”

Gerald was shocked all right. He never thought the young girl he rescued when he went out to buy some stuff was His Majesty’s younger sister. The only time he’d seen His Majesty was when Her Majesty returned to the Royal Capital. He was the guy riding at the front. Nevertheless, he was just a young man who just became a guard. The palace was comparable to a faraway dream for him. Now, however, the younger sister of the one and only man who’s the successor to the throne and only Crown Prince was lying on his bed? Who’d believe that?!

“I realise that you might not believe me, and I don’t have hopes that you do. You just need to take me to the palace. Hurry! If we’re late, you’ll be in trouble, too!”

Gerald was genuinely scared out his skin by the anxious and serious look on the girl. He looked at the young girl in front of him and in a muddled manner replied, “But... but... the palace is currently on high alert... An explosion apparently came from inside. That’s why I have to go on patrol at night, as well...There’s no way we can enter the palace at this time...”

“You just need to take me there!! What are you still rambling about when something so serious has happened?! Take me there! I’m begging you! Hurry! Onii-sama is in danger! He really is in danger!!”

“Ah!! Ah! Okay! Don’t cry! Don’t cry!! I’ll take you to the palace now! Don’t cry! I’ll take you there right now!”

Gerald Surock, who just became a guard in the Royal Capital, never imagined this would happen.

Originally, he just wanted to be a guard in the Royal Capital to catch and punish minor thieves to ensure the people have a safe place to live, then get married with an ordinary girl, have his own child and live his days in peace. That was his idea of a happy life.

The pointy gold spire was too far away to him. The thought had never crossed his mind, either. It wasn’t his world. The only thing he could do was look at the sun shine on the golden words “Long live Your Majesty” when the sun went down on his daily patrols.

Never did it cross his mind that he would get to marvel at the grandiose Royal Palace underneath the spire after a trip to buy some snacks...

Ch. 34

Alice was unstoppable.

Nobody inside the Outer Court could stop her. The Valkyries guarding the entrance all died in battle. Though they managed to stall Alice for a while, Alice was now standing inside the Outer Court.

Nobody could stop Alice. She could decimate every folding door. Blood was dripping off her blade. The remaining maids and male servants inside the Outer Court were quivering on the ground. Alice wasn't interested in them. She didn't come to kill them, and she wasn't revolting. She even stopped to give the painting of Her Majesty at the entrance of the Outer Court a deep bow with an absolutely solemn expression.

There was now no one left who could stop Alice in the Outer Court. Alice just had to ascend the stairs, stand at the door and smash it to pieces with a single punch. Then she just needed to pick her target up from his bed as if she was picking up a bird.

All of the Prince's mana had been sucked out by Luna, so he was incapable of putting up a resistance against her now. In fact, he couldn't even stand up. Luna is not a combatant and can't even drag him away to escape. Freya was probably being violated by some tramp.

Her target couldn't escape, and nobody could stop her. The job was so simple Alice wanted to burst out in loud laughter. It was far too simple. Had she known it would be so simple, she wouldn't have needed to concoct a plan or needed Castell's weapons. She just needed to come knocking on her own. She, alone, was enough.

That was how it supposed to go. There wasn't supposed to be anybody who could stop her.

However, Alice stopped in her tracks. She saw a small silhouette desperately trying to move chairs, bookshelves and other furniture over to create a barricade to the Prince's room. She continued to move things similarly to a diligent ant over and over and only stopped once the corridor was virtually completely blocked. Alice didn't stop her; instead, she watched her struggle with curiosity.

She watched her futile efforts.

This must be how God feels when he sees man struggle in pain. The corner of his mouth crept up into a smile as he watched the weakling's futile efforts. He would then extend his fingers out to pinch the weakling's creation and destroy it.

"Luna."

Luna shuddered and looked in her direction.

'Yes. That's the look.'

That's the look of despair and terror. That's the look. That's the look that brought her joy. If determination and steadiness spurred on her fighting spirit, then that gaze was the greatest entertainment for a hunter. Hunting is enjoyable, precisely because you get to relish the look of despair and terror of the prey.

Her Majesty was hunting, and so was she. She had to kill her prey, too. She was going to rip her prey's head off and turn it into her glory, her glorious trophy from her battle!!!

Alice walked up to the barricade Luna set up. She grabbed the leg of the chair in front of her, and then laughed before pulling apart the barricade Luna desperately struggled to put together along with her hope. It was comparable to a kid watching a castle he built get stomped to pieces.

She was small in stature, but she appeared as a giant to others, because she had power.

"Move, Elf."

Alice gripped Luna shoulder and aggressively threw her aside. Luna fell into

the rubble of her barricade and groaned due to the pain. Alice looked at the door to the room before her. As she went to strike, she saw a drawing of Her Majesty hanging on the door.

She couldn't disrespect Her Majesty even if it was just a drawing of her. She had to politely knock and only enter after being permitted entry or opening it with a key.

She could've smashed the door down. She could've smashed the obstacle; however, she couldn't violate the drawing.

"Elf, give me the key."

Alice turned her head to look at Luna. Luna slowly got up from the rubble with a wooden stick in hand. Her eyes were full of fear. Alice walked up to her and repeated herself in a cold tone, "Elf, give me the key. In exchange, you can leave. I won't kill you."

"That's impossible..."

Luna bit down on her lip as she looked at Alice with her terrified eyes. But despite her fear, she looked straight at Alice. She refused to avert her gaze. She was scared. Her entire body quaked. Her rationality and survival instincts were screaming at her to run; but, she didn't take one step away, nonetheless. She tightly gripped the wooden stick. The wooden stick in her hand was insignificantly comical. It was the equivalent of firewood.

"Hmph!"

Alice dealt Luna a heavy punch to her gut, which sent her flying. Luna crashed into the wall and slowly slid down onto the ground as blood came out of her mouth. She curled her body up in pain while quivering all over. Her blood and tears were coming out of her eyes and mouth. She couldn't even shout. Her organs had been severely shattered.

Alice walked up to Luna's side, grabbed her hair and lifted her head up. She looked at Luna's scrunched up face due to the pain and indifferently demanded, "Give me the key."

Luna struggled. Her shaky eyes were brimming with tears, and she couldn't see Alice clearly. In a muddled tone she replied, "Imp-...ossible....."

BANG!!

Luna's forehead smashed into the marble floor with a loud noise, causing even the candles on the wall to tremble with fear. Alice emotionlessly yanked Luna's hair up and smashed her head into the ground hard over and over as though she was vandalising a toy.

Luna's red blood stained the ground. Alice lifted her head up again. She took in a deep breath while looking at Luna whose face was literally bloody all over and warned, "I'll give you one last chance. Give me the key."

Luna was so weak now that her body couldn't even tremble. Her vision was just a blanket of dark red.

'Am I even breathing? Am I still alive? Who am I?'

The repetitive banging caused her to question if she was still alive, while her eyes that were covered with blood obstructed her vision, so she couldn't see Alice's face or even hear anything.

"Imp-..."

But even if she couldn't remember anything, even if she were to be reduced to mincemeat, she remembered one thing, and that was His Majesty's smile.

She would never forget the one she loved, the man who saved her...

Would you forget the sun?

'Sorry... Your Majesty...'

'I might... not be able to be at your side anymore in the future... I kept asking you if you would abandon me, but I never thought that I would be the one to leave you one day... I wasted your gentleness. I haven't repaid your kindness yet. I haven't seen your child come to this world yet...'

'Yet... I have to go...'

Alice sighed. She raised her fist up high, aimed at her toy's head, and then like a child, who was sick of his toy, destroyed her toy.

'Sorry... Your Majesty...'

The sound of her fist ripping through the air created a whistling wind...

'I love you... Your Majesty...'

All of her pain disappeared in an instant. Around her were bright lights...

She could seemingly see a sea of flowers and she was dancing alone in it this time. His Majesty stood next to her and held her hand with a bright smile. His gentle smile was warmer than the sun, giving her the urge to hug him tightly, never letting go...

"Luna....."

"Your Majesty... I love you..."

"I was wondering where it was. So it was here... Lucky I didn't hit so hard the first time, or I would've shattered it. That would've been unfortunate."

Alice stood up and looked at the sticky piece of metal in front of her. She snickered, and then kicked the limp body of flesh away. She then coldly remarked, "I never expected an elf's heart to be red, too..."

Ch. 35

The door gently opened as though Luna had returned; but, I opened my eyes to see Alice, who was covered in blood, instead. She had the key in between her fingers and looked at me with a cold look.. In that moment, I realised what she was after.

'I best not resist now. I don't know her reasons, but I'm aware that I can't defeat Alice in this state.'

I weakly reached for the necklace on the bedside cupboard. I felt that I had to call for Vyvyan now.

My sixth sense was telling me I would seriously die this time.

"Your Majesty, if I were you, I wouldn't touch that." A dagger flew through the air with a whistling sound and stabbed through the back of my hand, pinning it to the bedhead. The pain radiated throughout my entire body.

"Aaargh!!"

I felt numbed just hearing my own shriek of pain. The pain caused me to curl my body up. I tightly gripped the dagger on my left hand that pinned my hand to the bedhead with my right hand. I was sure I would rip my flesh out if I pulled the dagger out. If I'm going to die from blood loss, I might as well leave it there.

Alice stood before me with an eerie smile. She gently moved the dagger on my hand around and said, "Your Majesty, you won't need to suffer if you obey me... I was going to say that you wouldn't suffer any pain if you just obediently obeyed me, but I need to take you away first."

"I can go with you..." I took in a breath of cold air. I fought off the pain on my left hand and struggled to continue, "I'll do anything. I won't resist."

"Good to hear."

I looked at her body covered in blood. I fought the pain and asked, "But tell me, where's Luna? Where did Luna go?"

"Your Majesty..." Alice revealed a very spooky smile, and then pulled out something small from behind her. I blankly looked at what she was holding. It was a dark red thing that was wet with blood. Alice looked at me. She laughed loudly and exclaimed, "You never thought so either, right, Your Majesty?! This is your first time seeing one, right?! This is an elf's heart! This is the heart of a filthy elf just like the rest of them! You never thought so, huh? I'm amazed those dirty creatures have the same heart as us. I can't believe it's the same as Her Majesty's. How amusing..."

"I'll murder you!!!"

'Sometimes, anger can override all of one's other emotions.'

'I believe that.'

After I heard Alice's response, all of my blood rushed to my head. My vision became red. All other thoughts vanished from my mind. Fear, rationality, pain, everything... everything vanished. Every single one of my cells roared. My entire body roared!

'I'm going to fucking murder her!!'

'I'm going to murder this woman that killed my Luna! I'll show her no mercy!'

I'll kill her even if I end up dead with Luna! I've had enough! I was powerless to protect Mera, and now I failed to protect Luna, too! I failed to protect Luna! I'm going to avenge her at the very least!!'

I violently ripped out the dagger stabbed into my hand, and my blood sprayed onto my face. I didn't hesitate or shout. I slashed at Alice right away. She clearly froze for a moment, which was evident from the way she looked at me feeling a little shocked. However, she then subconsciously dodged my slash and kicked me aside. Before I could get up, Alice rushed toward me and booted my head.

The world blacked out for me in that moment. My vision went dark and my ears rang. I couldn't move after that instant. It was as though my brain was shattered and couldn't send signals to get my body to move.

"So, Your Majesty, if you don't resist, you won't have to suffer. Also, I am your senior at the end of the day. Are you really going to attack your senior? You can't do that, Your Majesty. For my safety's sake, I'm going to put some safety measures in place."

Alice walked around behind me. She lightly raised my wrists up, and then I felt a painful sensation, causing me to instinctively cry out as if I was trying to destroy my vocal chords. Alice released my hands that were now floppy as a noodle. She clapped her hands then pinched my chin and with a smile, said, "I said that I wouldn't kill you, but never said I'd send you there intact. Final warning, Your Majesty, if you act stubborn, it'll be your arms that I rip off next! It won't just be a mere dislocation."

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you! I'll kill you even if it costs me my life!! I swear it!! Alice! I'll definitely kill you!!"

I roared at Alice, who was in front of me. I no longer knew if I was even shouting in humanity's language anymore. I just wanted to shout.

'I want to rip the woman in front of me to shreds! I want to, personally, dig her heart out! I want to tear her head off her shoulders and place it before Luna's heart.'

'I'm going to kill her! I'll kill her no matter what!'

"I know, I know."

Alice was already getting sick of listening to me. She grabbed my sleeve and dragged me outside. I was dragged along similarly to a dog crawling through the remains of the furniture, puddles of blood and past Luna's corpse. I looked at Luna's corpse that looked as though it got vandalised and screamed. I struggled to break free, but nonetheless, I didn't even get to take another look at Luna.

'Just how powerless am I? Why is it that I can't do a single thing...?'

'I want to kill this woman! I'll kill her for sure! I have to! I'll kill her if it's the only thing I can do in this lifetime!!'

My tears and blood ran down into my mouth. The bitter taste was so bitter that I virtually couldn't open my eyes. All that I could taste was more and more bitterness entering my mouth. As a matter of fact, I couldn't stop the pain.

"I've brought him here, so I can kill him now, right?"

I don't know how long I was dragged along for, but then I got thrown onto the ground. I struggled to raise my head. I saw the silhouette of a fat person, as well as the silhouette of a woman. I recognised them.

'He's the finance minister and she's the regent of Castor.'

The finance minister looked at Alice and responded, "No. I want to exchange him with Her Majesty for something. My son wants Nier. I want to exchange him for his wife. Alice, I'm very grateful for your help, but perhaps you don't know the saying, 'the oriole is lurking behind'."

"That's right. We've discussed it. We're going to exchange him for Castor's independence and safety. That's what we need most."

Castor's regent walked over. She grabbed my hair gently then looked at me with a cold smile and mocked me, "Your Majesty, I wonder if you ever imagined this day would come when you were acting stuck up in front of us."

"Sure, I never thought there'd come a day when I'd want to murder you lot."

I shouted in her face and head butted her on her chin.

"You're quite the tough one. But you'll be joining your most beloved mom soon," Castor's regent tossed me onto the ground as she rubbed her chin and snickered.

She waved her hands, and then armed soldiers slowly approached from every direction. They then aimed their spears at Alice.

Alice looked at them with a cold look. She ignored the guards around and indifferently remarked, "It appears that you intend to revolt against Her Majesty, as well."

"We've never been loyal to her before! You forced us to submit! Castor will never submit! You should've expected this when you were scheming against us! Castor will never be your slave!!"

Castor's regent ruthlessly waved her hand and loudly commanded, "Kill this woman!!"

Ch. 36

"Fuu... fuu... fuu..."

Alice panted for air. She was basically completely covered in blood. The blood on her body and ripped clothes dripped onto the ground, thereby creating a pool of blood. I struggled to turn over. If I kept lying on the ground, I was bound to die by drowning in the blood.

I turned onto my side and saw Alice dripping with blood. It was no longer clear if the blood dripping off her was her own or the blood of others. All that was certain was that she was surrounded by dismembered corpses and the fat ass' included. Castor's Regent's shocked face was in front of me staring at me. As a matter of fact, she was lying in the same posture as I was except that I had no idea where everything below her neck was.

"It's over now, right...? It should be over now, right...?"

Alice looked upwards and laughed similarly to a manic. She wasn't burdened by all of the blood on her. To the contrary, it was as if it was a drug that drove her mad. I watched her stand among the corpses. She resembled a wild animal in battle as she ripped apart the bodies as if she was ripping leaves or something. She loudly ripped the corpses apart. Alice isn't a technical fighter.

She doesn't fight with technique as Nier does; but despite that, her wild fighting method was very practical. Nobody could close in on her.

She turned her head around and blinked her eyes as though the blood affected her sight, too. She walked over to me. I watched Alice, who was nothing short of a demon from hell, approach me. I wasn't scared. I wasn't scared right now, because all of my emotions were overridden with a single emotion, and that was rage.

'I want to kill the person in front of me. I not scared to die killing her. I just want to bloody kill the woman in front of me. I'll kick her to death if I don't have my arms. Snap my legs and I'll use my teeth. I'll tackle and head butt her to death if that's what I have to resort to!'

'I want my Luna!! I just want my Luna! She killed my Luna, so I'm going to murder her!!'

She stood before me and reached out to choke me by my neck, causing every inch of my neck bones to scream. I stopped getting any oxygen, and my blood flow got cut off. I desperately lowered my head and kicked Alice's legs, but she just silently let me kick her.

She was great at controlling herself. She wasn't trying to kill me in one go. Her aim was to make me suffocate to death.

'If this is my end, I have nothing to say.'

'I've charged through countless obstacles and returned from situations where I thought I was doomed by relying on those around me. I relied on Lucia, Nier and my moms. Luna is dead now, though, and I can't escape. I let Luna's efforts be in vain. I let her loyalty be in vain.'

'I'm so sorry, Luna. I couldn't avenge you. I couldn't protect you. I can't even avenge you this time. Sorry, Luna, sorry... If I could choose again, I would definitely choose to leave you on the elven side. I always bring misfortune to those around me. I caused your death. It's my fault you had to die that way.'

'I shouldn't have let Luna stay with me that time. I should've been more resolute and had her stay in the elven lands. If Luna was there, she wouldn't have died. She'd be dancing happily in the sea of flowers, take naps in there at

noon and have a more beautiful and blissful life. She'd have someone better than me love her. It's my fault she met with this fate. It's my fault I kept her at my side...'

'I caused her death.'

'I was the one who caused her death...'

'I'm sorry, Luna...'

'If I was able to make you happy at my side, then I feel a little better. It's all right, Luna. I'm going to you now. Maybe I'll be able to catch up to you, since you're injured and can't walk fast. I'll be able to continue taking care of you when I get there, even if it's hell we're heading to.'

Fwooooosh!!

I suddenly heard several sharp sounds whistle by my ear. The cold air entered my lungs again. Alice let go of my hand, and I desperately gasped for air. I blankly looked at Alice, who staggered a few steps backwards. She grabbed the arrow in her shoulder and violently stared behind me.

"I won't let you hurt my husband!"

"Lucia?!"

I turned my head around to look. I was in no mood for romantic stuff. I shouted, "Lucia! Run! You can't beat her!!"

"Damn elf!"

Alice roared at her, and then rushed at her. A mellow sound of bodies colliding and the sound of a sword stabbing into flesh came from behind. As I shouted, I struggled to turn my body onto an angle. To my surprise, I saw Nier stab Alice right through her shoulder. She stood in front of Lucia and used all her might to stop Alice's tackle. The two of them got knocked back by Alice's tackle. If Nier didn't manage to land her stab through Alice's shoulder, then the two of them would probably have got knocked flying.

Nier used all her might to rip the sword out horizontally thereby lopping off one of Alice's arms. At the same instant she lopped her arm off, she threw a kick to Alice's lower abdomen, consequently putting space between them.

“Nier!!”

With one hand pressed onto where blood was pouring out of her now missing arm, she shouted at Nier. Nier huffed and puffed. If she was still the Nier of the past, she would be fine right now. Unfortunately, she wasn't in a condition to fight a prolonged fight now. Lucia tossed her bow and arrows aside, drew her long sword at her waist and vigilantly watched the monster in front of her.

Nier adjusted her breathing and explained, “Alice, I won't allow you to put my husband and the man I am tasked with protecting in danger. I won't allow you to, both as the Princess and a Valkyrie.”

“Get lost, Nier. You carry Her Majesty's blood in your body right now, so I won't hurt you, but I'm going to kill that elf behind you now!”

Nier stood in front of Lucia and blocked her off. She fearlessly replied, “I won't let you hurt Lucia, either! I don't like Lucia, either, but she's my husband's woman. I won't let anything that would upset my husband to happen. If you want to hurt any of them, you'll have to step over my dead body.”

Alice coldly glared at Nier similarly to a wild beast staring at its prey. Nier didn't say another word. Instead, she looked at me and gave me a little smile.

‘I didn't know if Nier has a chance against Alice, but I was oddly reassured. It felt as nobody could threaten me as long as Nier was next to me.’

Alice stepped forward so swiftly that she created a whistling sound. Nier stood her ground. Lucia picked up the bow and arrow next to her feet and loaded up her bow.

“Stop!!”

Ice picks came down from the sky, blocking off Alice's path, while a rain of ice-picks came down back and front similarly to an iron maiden, firmly pinning Alice to the ground.

Elizabeth looked at Alice, who was completely immobilised on the ground by ice-picks, and shouted at Vyvyan, who was next to her, “Vyvyan!!”

Vyvyan looked at everything before her eyes with a cold look and exclaimed, “I told you, I'll kill anyone who puts my son in danger no matter who they are!”

Ch. 37

“Son, my son... I’m glad you’re okay. I’m so glad you’re okay.”

Vyvyan pulled me into her tight embrace while crying as she gently stroked my wound and kissed my cheeks. Luckily, Mom made it in time, or I really would’ve died. Vyvyan used magic to heal my wound. Besides feeling weak, I was now fine. I gripped Vyvyan’s clothes tightly and sobbed on her chest as a kid would. She tightly hugged me as though she was afraid that I’d disappear in the next instant.

Nier and Lucia sat down to one side and panted for oxygen as they looked over in my direction feeling somewhat jealous.

“Mom, I have to kill her...” I raised my head up. I wiped the tears at the corner of my eyes then looked at Vyvyan and seriously said, “She killed my Luna. She killed my only personal servant. I have to kill her! I must kill her!!”

“I understand, I understand. Son... Mommy understands... Mommy wants to kill her, too, but that woman still needs to ask her some things.”

I struggled to turn my head over to look at Mommy Elizabeth looking down at Alice, who was pinned to the ground and immobilised. In the face of ultimate power, not even Alice could break free of Vyvyan’s magic. She wasn’t dead yet. She desperately tried to raise her head. Despite her bleeding from her mouth and her limbs being pinned down, she glared at me with her gaze full of hatred and urges to charge over and kill me, the same way I looked at her and felt about her.

“Alice...”

Elizabeth crouched down to look at her with sadness in her eyes. She placed her hand gently on Alice’s head. She sighed and asked, “Why?”

“Because that brat... that shameless bastard has no right to succeed you as the ruler of your empire! You have been lied to for too long! You should be the heroic Empress on the frontlines as in the past, yet you want to give up your

throne for a kid! That is not you! That is not what you wanted! You told us that you wanted an empire that would not fall, yet you want to hand the empire you gave up so much to establish to an ignorant brat?!"

"I will not allow you to insult my son!"

Vyvyan aggressively waved her hand, causing virtually all of the ice picks in Alice's body to explode. However, due to Vyvyan casting a spell to control Alice's time, she would remain on the verge of death until the spell ended regardless of how much damage she suffered.

'I'm not sure if that was Vyvyan's way of keeping her alive for Elizabeth or to torture Alice.'

"He's my son, Alice. He's my only son."

Elizabeth sighed. She gently stroked Alice's head with a helpless smile and explained, "Perhaps there's a problem with your thinking, Alice. I was no longer the warrior fighting on the front lines a long time ago. I'm old now. My biggest wish isn't to have a great empire. I wanted a great empire, so that I could bring my son home. Alice, it might be that you can't understand me. Didn't you recognise that despite being by my side for so many years? I, truthfully, don't want to be an Empress. What I want is my family. I want my son. I love my son so much. I love him very, very dearly. My empire wasn't for me, but for me to provide my son with a suitable and safe environment for him. Alice, my son has always been trying his best. He's always been trying hard in order to become a qualified Emperor. You've changed, Alice. You just want me to rule. You're not considering who would be better suited to be rule."

Alice looked at the Empress with a dumbfounded look. Elizabeth's expression showed neither blame nor anger; instead, she showed nothing but immense sorrow and hopelessness as if she wasn't looking at a rebel, but herself. She looked at Alice and softly said, "This time, you were wrong, Alice."

"Was I...? I was wrong, was I...?"

Alice lowered her eyes to look at the blood on the ground and quietly went on, "I just wanted... I just wanted... your smile... I just wanted... that heroic Empress... Was I wrong...? Your Majesty... you... you... have already..."

“I’ve let you down, Alice.”

Elizabeth drew her long sword at her waist. The cold blade of the Elven King sword shined. The reflections of the metal blade were similar to falling tears. Alice looked at the sword in a daze. That sword accompanied Her Majesty as she travelled the continent, be it snow, rain, sunny, cold or hot. That sword symbolised Her Majesty’s pride and dignity.

“I’m old now... Alice... that period of time has passed... I’m... no longer that fearless girl... I don’t have any ambitions anymore. I just want to live in peace with my son... I’ve disappointed you, Alice.”

“No... Your Majesty... you have never let us down, ever... What I am most proud of in this life is that I was your vassal... It is just that... I cannot understand you.....”

Alice gently closed her eyes. She revealed a smile and two trails of tears ran down her cheeks, washing the blood off her cheeks.

Elizabeth rested the Elven King sword on her neck. Elizabeth looked at her personal bodyguard, her personal bodyguard that had accompanied her for over ten years, her personal bodyguard who accompanied her onto countless battlefields and went through countless dangers with her. She gently raised the long sword up in her hand. She softly added, “Alice, our time has passed. The era where we dominated and galloped on our horses to defeat our enemies has ended...”

“Perhaps that is why I cannot understand you, Your Majesty... I did not understand, Your Majesty... Sorry... I have caused you trouble.”

Alice suddenly opened her eyes to look toward Nier. Nier lingered for a moment then stood up. Nier made a small bow and asked, “Captain Alice, what are your orders?”

“Protect that brat well, Nier. After I killed his personal servant, he didn’t show any fear in spite of going through all of this. He only showed anger and a desire for vengeance. He’s hot-blooded. He’s Her Majesty’s son without a doubt. Nier, we’re all machines that can think, but why can’t I understand Her Majesty while you can understand that brat?”

Nier shook her head and while looking at her, replied, “No, Captain Alice. I have not had any new revelations nor have I had any new thoughts. I just do not act on my own accord. I make sure to ask His Majesty first. Self-presumptuous benefits are never what our master wants. Captain Alice, you acted without Her Majesty’s order. That is your mistake.”

“Was it...? I see now.....”

Alice shut her eyes. Elizabeth looked to Vyvyan and Vyvyan gave her a nod. I struggled to stand up and shouted, “Mom!! Let me finish her!!”

However, Elizabeth didn’t stop. As soon as Vyvyan released her time spell, Elizabeth swung her sword down. Alice’s body jolted one last time. Her blood slowly spilt and mixed into the dried puddle of blood from earlier. Her small body appeared so pitiful.

Her smile, however, didn’t have a single hint of pain.

“Vyvyan, Nier, you two leave first.”

Elizabeth faced her back to us and lowered her Elven King sword that had blood trickling off the blade. The blade looked a lot gloomier than before. Elizabeth’s back made her appear as though she broke down and no longer had the strength to raise her sword.

“Oh right, Son...”

Just as Vyvyan was about to carry me away, Elizabeth suddenly turned around. She looked at me. Her face was covered in tears as if a spider spun a web on her face.

“Sorry for letting you get scared... Mommy... is sorry...”

Ch. 38

“ONII-SAMA!!!”

Just as I got to the door, a small silhouette rushed toward me while I was in a hazy frame of mind, almost colliding into Vyvyan. Vyvyan, who was on high

alert, nearly attacked her. Vyvyan is currently very dangerous. Currently, she's similar to a hedgehog that's got its spikes poised. She would attack anyone who tried to approach me.

I looked at Freya and weakly asked, "Freya... are you all right?"

Freya looked at me anxiously, and then at Vyvyan. She then replied, "Yes, I am fine. I am so glad to see that you are okay. They discovered me, and I only managed to wake up thanks to a guard."

"I see... I need to thank that guard properly... then..."

"My son is very weak right now. If there's any business, let Lucia and Nier handle it."

Vyvyan hugged me tightly and refused to let go. Freya nodded, but looked concerned when she saw my complexion. She replied, "I shall not disturb you anymore, Your Majesty... Miss Nier... Please explain to me what happened... It was Alice, am I right? I am certain it was her....."

"Don't mention her in my presence!!"

I shouted so loudly everyone jolted from fright. I looked at Freya with my fists tightly clenched. I yelled at the top of my lungs, "Do not mention her in my presence!! I wanted to kill her! I wanted to kill her! Why didn't she give me the chance?! I didn't get to kill her! I had a chance to! I could've killed her! Why did Mom kill her first?! I wanted to personally rip her apart! I wanted to rip her limb from limb!! She killed my Luna! I wanted to her to pay with her blood!!"

Freya froze for a moment before softly asking, "Onii-sama... Did Luna..."

"Yes! Yes! That bitch killed my Luna! She killed my only personal servant! I only have one personal servant! I only have one Luna!! I only have one...! What am I supposed to do...? I... I... no longer have Luna... I... I..."

My eyes filled up with tears as if wave after wave formed. My vision, that was unclear, was now even fuzzier. My throat got completely blocked by my pain and resentment to the point that I couldn't even make a sound when I cried.

"Okay, now, Son... Son... don't cry... don't cry... Luna... Luna won't come back..."

Vyvyan gently wiped my eyes. My vision was all hazy. It felt as if my conscious was fading by the moment, and I eventually fell unconscious after running out of strength...

'All around is a sea of bright flowers. I can seemingly smell the scent of the flowers. Birds and insects were taking flight and landing. The bright sunrays warmed up the ground, spreading the flower scent and fragrances out. The cool breeze carried infinite gentleness to me as the breeze blew to me.' 'Smoke came from the village in the forest. The shrine of God was practically the god's secluded home inside the bright sea of flowers.'

'The sea of flowers is honestly so beautiful, so beautiful that being in this world is misplacing it. It's totally different to this world full of slaughter. There never should've been a war here. Misfortunes should never have happened here. This place should've been free of schemes. This place is Luna's home. This should be a pure and beautiful place.'

'But where is Luna?'

I looked around. Around me was a bright sea of flowers. Everything was the same as before. The the sea of flowers I saw was as beautiful as it was before, too. I could even see a sea of flower petals.

'But where is the girl that I love, who's supposed to be dancing in the sea of flowers with a smile? Where is the girl that I love, who's meant to be here for a breather when she's tired? Where is the girl that I love, who's more beautiful than this scene?'

'Where is my Luna? Where is my Luna who is supposed to be here? This is where Luna's home is supposed to be. This is where Luna's home is supposed to be. Luna should be as beautiful as this place. No, she should be even more beautiful than this place.'

'But where is my Luna?'

'My Luna... got captured and taken to humanity's lands, then violated by humans, then abandoned by humans, insulted by humans, and then killed by humans... My Luna, the beautiful flower of my life got utterly destroyed by humans. I watched her get taken from this sea of flowers. I saw her flower petals get plucked off, and I saw her tossed aside. Humans destroyed everything

of hers. They destroyed everything nice she had.'

'They destroyed my Luna.'

'My Luna. however... never showed them any hostility. As a matter of fact, she died for humanity's Prince, as well.'

"As that is the case, Son, come back to the elven side... Come back. The schemes here have got nothing to do with you. There's no need for you to shoulder all of this. None of this has anything to do with you to begin with. Son, if you're tired, just come back."

During my foggy moments, I could seemingly hear somebody speak to me. I opened my eyes and gently touched my face, but all I felt was a cold sensation.

I turned my head to see Vyvyan tightly hugging me. Vyvyan's eyes were also brimming with tears. While she held me in her arms, she sobbed, "Let's go back... Son... let's go home... You've done enough here... You've been hurt by humans enough times here... Son, Mommy's heart aches for you... Let's go home... You don't have to go through so much back home. You don't need to do anything... Son, let's go home..."

"Mom... Mom..."

Vyvyan and I gently embraced. She patted me on my back and spoke in her hoarse voice, "It's enough now, right? Son, it's enough now, right...? Your kindness is meaningless here. Even if you can be kind to others and trust them, it's meaningless to humans... Humans only want what they want without considering others. You've tried hard enough, but still can't win their acknowledgement. You've done enough my son. You've done enough..."

I raised my head up to look at Vyvyan and ask, "What... what happened with Luna...?"

Mom looked at me. She stroked my cheek gently then gave me a kiss on my forehead before replying, "That woman held a funeral for her to commemorate her loyalty and gave her a posthumous title of heroine, as well as carving a statue of her. Everyone from the vassal states participated. The King of Castor has been imprisoned. A new administrator will go there to take over the role. The finance minister's entire family was eradicated with no survivors... It's

just...”

“Just what...?”

“The funeral was for two people.”

Vyvyan looked at me with a reluctant look and softly elaborated, “To commemorate their loyalty, Elizabeth buried both of them. One was Luna who died for you, and the other was... Alice...”

“Is she screwing with me?! Why?! Why does Alice get a funeral when she did that?! Why?! Why?! She killed my Luna! I didn’t get to kill her! Am I supposed to look at her damn grave when I go to pay my respects to Luna?!”

Shouting caused a deep stinging sensation in my chest. Vyvyan gently stroked my head to calm me down. She softly responded, “That’s why we should go home, Son... Here, even your mom acts on her selfish desires... I, on the other hand, genuinely love you. I can throw away anything for you. I would make an enemy of the entire world for you... As long as it makes you happy and well, then Mommy will do anything... Humanity doesn’t suit you. Son... come with Mommy... You’ve gone through too much already...”

“... Okay.”

Ch. 39

“Please wait a moment.”

Freya stood in the middle of the path to block off the group of people walked over.

She narrowed her eyes to look at the man in a formal robe before her and said, “Mr Castell, has your injury healed? It has only been three days. You sure do heal fast.”

Castell wasn’t as dignified as he was back then, and his gaze didn’t contain as much arrogance as it once did. To the contrary, his eyes looked slightly lifeless. He looked down. His formal robe, which previously fit him, was now empty, making him appear similar to a comical scarecrow in the field.

He smiled. The people following behind him were mostly Valkyries, as well as the Empress, herself. Freya looked at the Empress with her eyes narrowed. Elizabeth evidently looked a lot more haggard. The Prince has been unconscious for the last two days and only just woken up. He was currently eating, and Freya was in charge of guarding the door.

Freya didn't salute Elizabeth when she saw her this time.

"Miss Freya, Her Majesty wishes to see His Majesty. If possible, please go in and notify His Majesty."

Castell initially waited for Freya to give way, but Freya just stood there and forbade anyone from passing. The Empress didn't force her way past. Castell had no choice, but to look at Freya and stubbornly try to convince her. Normally it would be the Empress who would tell Freya to get out of the way. However, Freya had no intention of giving way. Luna had just died, so he didn't dare to come into conflict with the Prince's people when he's the Empress' personal attendant. The Prince's relationship with the Empress' was currently extremely tense. When the funeral was held, Freya attended on behalf of the Prince. At the funeral, Freya kicked Alice's tombstone, and then turned around and left. Now that the Prince had woken up, he was most likely going to do the same thing. If they come into conflict with each other now, the Prince and the Empress's relationship will be broken for good.

"Ah, I know. However, His Majesty is still unwell, so please forgive him for not accepting visitors."

Freya coldly glared at Castell then sat her bottom onto the ground before finally lying horizontally – relative to them – to block their path. Castell was stunned by Freya's tough attitude. Regardless of what the circumstances may be, she was facing the Empress of the empire after all. If she did this in the past, her head would be rolling on the ground already.

'You dare refuse the Empress? Have you got a death wish?'

Castell clenched his teeth and thundered, "Freya! In front of you is Her Majesty! How dare you act so insolent?! Who gave you the audacity to act so conceited?!"

Freya swept her cold gaze over to the Empress. Elizabeth still had a poker face

on. She emotionlessly looked at Freya. Freya snickered then folded her arms and indifferently said, "Kill me, then. Kill me, and you'll be able to enter the same way your hero killed Luna to enter. The Empress's personal bodyguard became a hero by killing the Prince's personal servant, so I guess the Empress considers the Prince a traitor? That would make me, the traitor's sister an accomplice. All right, then. There is no need for further words, just kill me, and you can enter."

"You..."

Castell was so furious that his entire body trembled, but he couldn't do anything to Freya. The Empress didn't say anything. If he did something, he really could sever the Empress's relationship with the Prince. The Prince is bound to be furious at the moment. If he does anything to Freya, the Prince might leave humanity for good, never to return.

"Freya..."

The Empress finally spoke out. She looked at Freya, gently sighed and said, "My purpose in coming here this time is to explain Alice's matter to my son. I must provide you with an appropriate explanation. Can you trust me for once? Go and notify my son. If possible, I'll explain it to my son."

Castell had never heard the Empress speak as if she was pleading as she just did. She had never pleaded anyone. It was always others pleading her. Freya looked at the Empress. She decided that it wasn't a good idea for her to continue with this when she saw how down the Empress looked. After all, it benefited neither side if the Empress and Prince's relationship crumbled. It didn't matter if Castell and her never crossed paths for their entire life, but the Empress and Prince were mother and son. She, therefore, decided it was best to notify him.

Freya stood up and entered the room behind her. Not long after, she came out and indifferently said, "His Majesty said he needs to rest and won't see Her Majesty. His Majesty is still unwell. After he recuperates, we will leave the Royal Capital and return to Troy City. After that, we will return to the Elven Imperial Capital, Duargana."

"What do you mean by that?! The incident had nothing to do with Her

Majesty. Are you threatening Her Majesty with your departure?!"

Freya coldly countered, "No, Mr. Castell. Please do not put His Majesty on such a high pedestal, or else, one of the girls behind you will launch another attack on His Majesty in the middle of the night again. Who's going to block them off this time? You or me? Or will it be the pregnant Lucia and Nier?"

Standing at the door, she looked at the Empress and said, "I'm just stating facts. His Majesty has already decided to return to the elven capital. I'm not threatening you. I'm simply stating the facts. Thank you for looking after His Majesty during this time. That will be all."

"Move!"

The Empress pressed her hand onto Freya's shoulder and aggressively threw her aside. She hammer fisted the door violently and shouted, "Son... Son! Son!! You can hear me, right?! You can hear me, right?! Mommy was in the wrong this time. Mommy's personal bodyguard killed your personal servant. That's Mommy's fault. But... But... Luna did it to protect you. Alice eliminated a few traitors, as well... Mommy understands your feelings for Luna, but Alice has accompanied Mommy as Mommy's personal bodyguard for over ten years... Your heart aches, because you lost Luna, but Mommy is hurting, too, because Mommy lost Alice. Mommy knows that you want to get revenge, but who is Mommy going to get revenge against? Mommy personally beheaded Mommy's most trusted bodyguard that saved mommy's life before. Mommy... Mommy... Mommy... could die from the pain..."

Maybe Vyvyan had casted some magic on the door. Despite the Empress's efforts, the door wouldn't budge. The Empress gave up. She leaned on the door with her bodyguard and loudly wailed. Her body powerlessly slid down the door and onto the ground as she leaned on the door and loudly wept.

"Please... please... Son... please... forgive Mommy.... Please feel for Mommy... You're Mommy's last family member... Mommy only has you.... Mommy no longer has Mommy's personal bodyguard. Mommy almost lost Mommy's personal attendant... Mommy is scared.... Mommy is scared of a palace where there is only Mommy, alone... Please... Please, Son... Don't leave mommy. Don't go... Don't go... Please... My son... please... forgive Mommy! It was Mommy's

fault. It was Mommy's fault. Mommy will do anything.... Just please don't go..."

The Empress knelt at the door and hammered the door weakly while wailing painfully. Her tears coursed down her face. The corridor was silent. The only sound in the corridor was the Empress's wails and the sound of her hammering the door.

Castell looked at her black hair sprawled out on the ground in a daze. The Empress was truly afraid. It was the first time that he had seen her afraid. She was so afraid that her body quivered. She was afraid that the Prince would up and leave the next instant. She leaned onto the door with all her weight. Perhaps she was using her body to stop her son from leaving.

The door gently opened. The Empress looked inside with a blank look. The room was empty. Nobody was inside.

Vyvyan wields magic. While she can't teleport around in the Royal Capital, it's but a simple matter for her to teleport to Troy City or Duargana.

"That's how it is."

Freya, who was standing at the door, made a small bow. She snickered, "Goodbye, Your Majesty. I am His Majesty's sister and his strategist. As the Princesses have left, there is no reason for me to stay. Goodbye."

The Empress didn't stop her.

She stayed kneeling on the ground with her head down and hair sprawled out as she cried. Her silhouette made her appear as though she aged in an instant.

Castell softly sighed. He then waved his hand and said, "You can all leave. I shall keep Her Majesty company, myself."

"Roger."

The Valkyries nodded. and then turned to leave. Castell sat down next to the Empress. He looked at the empty room in front of them and softly said, "Your Majesty... this place truly still is a cage....."

Glossary

*As you may have noticed, Freya used contractions in her speech as she dropped the formal tone here

Ch. 40

“Royal Capital!”

Philes looked at me with a blank look. Vyvyan placed me onto the bed and hushed him. His cute face showed his disbelief. He looked at Vyvyan and whispered, “Umm... Your Highness, what happened...? Do we need to rally up the unit.....?”

“Well, there’s no problem with you rallying up the army, but your group may not be able to defeat Elizabeth.”

Vyvyan said that in a faint voice then left the room with him and gently shut the door. Nier and Lucia looked at Vyvyan. After hesitating for a moment, Lucia asked, “Your Highness, what are we returning to Troy City for?”

“This is my son’s home. We have to sort some things out before we can return to the elven Imperial Capital.” Vyvyan provided a simple explanation then looked at Nier and said, “Nier, though you are neither my child nor an elf, you are one of the girls my son loves most. After we return to the elven Imperial Capital, you may never be able to return to humanity’s lands. Are you sure you want to come?”

Nier nodded and resolutely replied, “I am okay with it. I will follow my husband wherever he goes. It does not matter where we go as long as I can be with him. I do not mind where we go or how life is.”

“All right. I’ll go back and make some preparations.”

Vyvyan then stroked Nier’s. She softly laughed, “You girls should spend some more time by my son’s side these days. He doesn’t have a personal servant anymore, as well, so those jobs will fall on your shoulders for now. Mom really wants to stay, but Mom has to make a trip back to prepare things for after his return.”

“We understand.”

The two girls nodded. Vyvyan looked at them feeling consoled, and then

vanished in an instant right in front of their eyes. The two girls looked at each other. After a moment of silence, Nier said, “I think that we should stick to the old routine with you accompanying him during the day and me at night.”

“Uhm.....” Lucia nodded. She then looked at Nier and timidly thanked her, “Thanks.”

“Hmm?” Nier froze up for a second. She looked at Lucia and fumbled, as she didn’t know what to do. She asked, “Thanks for what?”

“Thank you for protecting me that night. If you weren’t there, I would most likely have got knocked flying.” Lucia shyly continued, “I’m only going to thank you this once. Don’t make me thank you a second time... I’m only grateful to you for that. I’m not saying that I acknowledge you.”

Nier laughed in a soft tone while looking at Lucia. She then grabbed a light hold of Lucia’s hand. Lucia froze up. She looked up at Nier. Nier tilted her head and said, “It’s fine. I don’t intend to like you, either. I only saved you, because you’re pregnant with my husband’s child.”

The two of them giggled. Nier then gently pulled Lucia into her arms. Nier gently stroked her back and whispered, “Luna is no longer with us... from now on... from now on... there will be some things I can’t speak about to anyone... Luna was my one and only friend. Once we’re in the elven lands, I really... will be friendless.”

“... Don’t worry. You’ll have new friends, Nier.”

Lucia patted Nier on her back, and then the two of them let go of each other. Lucia continued, “His Highness must be heartbroken now... Let’s do our best to distract him and help him direct his attention elsewhere. I don’t think His Highness will end the incident with Luna.”

“Uhm.”

Nier nodded. She then looked toward the South and sighed. She lamented, “How is this going to end...? He probably won’t have a personal servant in the future, will he...?”

=====

When I woke up again, my surroundings were dark. It appeared to be night time. The pattern on the ceiling of the room emitted a feeling that put me feel at ease.

This is Troy City.

I turned my head. Lucia was tightly holding my right hand. She was curled up next to me, hugging my right arm and holding my hand. On my left was someone sitting at the window reading a book as the sun remained visible on the horizon for its last moments.

Shut!

She noticed me wake up, so she quickly shut the book. Her long red hair swayed. Lorana looked at me. She gently touched me on my forehead. She lowered her voice and remarked, "You're up, Your Highness."

"Uhm....."

I nodded.

"But it looks like something happened to you over there."

Lorana scratched her head and fiddled with her hair. She used to have short hair but started growing her hair out at some point. Perhaps that indicated that she was no longer willing to run around and preferred to settle down at one location permanently. I looked at her and nodded before telling her everything that happened.

"So that's what happened. No wonder why you fled back here."

"I didn't flee! It's that I don't want to be there! For as long as Alice's tombstone stands, I shall never return back there!! I'm seriously mad, and I seriously don't want to go back there! Why? Why the hell? Why the hell don't I even get a chance to avenge Luna when she died that way?! That's not to mention that Alice died with a smile! My personal servant died! My personal servant died! I couldn't kill a single person! I didn't get to kill a single person! Alice is dead. That fat fuck's entire family is dead, and that Castor Bitch is dead, too! What the fuck about me?! What about me?! What am I supposed to do?! Why did it end this way?! If I could have killed at least one of them, I would be able to face Luna's grave, but why can't I do anything?!"

Lorana listened to me roar in a muffled voice. I tightly clenched my fist.

'I wouldn't care even if my fingernails stabbed into my flesh. I could kill with my hatred. I seriously feel so wronged that I could die. If I could avenge her, I wouldn't complain, but I can't kill a single one of them!'

'I feel so damned wronged. The injustice makes me sick.'

"Do you feel that Elizabeth was in the wrong in relation to this incident?"

"Not previously, but why did she give Alice a tombstone? She killed my Luna! She deserved to die! I was already pissed that Mommy Elizabeth didn't let me kill her, so why would she go and erect a tombstone for her, too?!"

"That will depend on how you look at this. Are you looking at it from a political standpoint or as a simple mother and son quarrel? Regardless of how you look at it, though, you can't change one thing, and that is that Elizabeth is your mother. You have no way of denying that."

"I don't intend to do anything to Mommy Elizabeth. I just don't want to see Alice's tombstone when I visit Luna to pay my respect. Luna's grave should be located in a more beautiful place. I will not allow Luna to stay next to that fucking retard forever! I want to personally put Luna to rest!"

'I know of a better place to put Luna to rest. Luna should be with flowers, not with a maniac.'

"Regardless, Elizabeth is your mother. Frankly, Elizabeth is very afraid of loneliness. If you don't have any resentment toward Elizabeth, then you should go back as soon as possible to see her. She's very pitiful, as well. She's lost her personal bodyguard. If she loses even her son, she'll be too pitiful."

Ch. 41

“Your Majesty, this is the poetry collection that has been sorted for you. Although the hunting event ended awkwardly this time, the annual meeting was a success.”

Castell passed a small booklet to Elizabeth. Elizabeth sluggishly took it and saw the poem she composed when she opened it.

*When will I be able to spend my days with my son,
Gazing at the snow in the North until I grow old?*

It had only been a few days ago when she wrote those two lines. She was looking forward to her blissful and simple life with her son in the future. Castell was yet to be injured, Alice was still around, and her son was still sitting on her lap watching over her as she wrote a poem.

‘It hadn’t been long. It hadn’t been long ago at all... It was merely been a few days ago. Only a few days had past. My personal bodyguard, who had accompanied me for over ten years, is never coming back.’

‘At the time, I didn’t have anything. The barbarians had taken Rosvenor, and I had lost everything. Not one person was willing to stay with me. Only Alice stayed with me the entire time. Alice smashed my throne with me and followed her conquests. I was able to be fearless and bold, precisely because I had Alice. Alice wasn’t just a bodyguard to me. Alice was a friend, a very loyal friend to me.’

However, I beheaded her friend with her own hands. I avenged Luna and saved my son, so why was he not willing to stay? Luna is very important to him, and similarly, Alice was very important to me. Alice didn’t revolt. Her thinking was just off-track. She killed the true rebels for me, so why, why can’t I commemorate Alice?’

‘I didn’t want to be at odds with my son. I can do anything for my only son, but I can’t bear letting somebody else savagely kill my old friend. I never expected that would happen to Luna. My son’s rage was reasonable, but can’t he be a little considerate of me?’

The Empress doesn't have many friends. Honestly, she only had one friend she could talk to about anything, but she wouldn't have such a friend again.

Her tears smudged the letters. Elizabeth spaced out as she looked at the booklet before her. She softly murmured, "Castell, what exactly did I do wrong...? I've killed those who deserved to die. I've buried those who deserved to be buried, so why? Why...? Why did it still end up this way?"

"Your Majesty, I think that you may have never understood..."

Castell hesitated for a moment and then explained, "Perhaps it is precisely because you did everything which infuriated His Majesty."

"Castell?"

Elizabeth looked at him with a dumbfounded look. Castell hesitated then elaborated, "His Majesty's personal servant died this time, so he is bound to want to personally get revenge, but you killed Alice. I think that will be resolved if we explain it to His Majesty. However, you did not give His Majesty the right to put Luna to rest. You placed His Majesty's hero with our hero. His Majesty cannot accept that."

"But... My son's and my... do you people not support my son?! He's my son!"

"It is different, Your Majesty." Castell let out a heavy sigh. He clarified, "To be honest, I am reluctant to acknowledge it, as well, Your Majesty. His Majesty's vassals are not your vassals. If you are always with His Majesty, then you could explain that your vassals are His Majesty's vassals, and we will support His Majesty. But if he is a Prince who appears out of the blue, we will distance ourselves, while His Majesty will also maintain his distance from us, who he is not familiar with. As we are by your side, we naturally support you. Meanwhile His Majesty's people will not be as loyal to you as we are when they see you; thereby creating a faction that supports His Majesty and another faction that supports you, in other words, those around His Majesty and those of us around you. Luna is His Majesty's vassal. She died at the hands of Alice, who is from our faction. You did what His Majesty should do on his behalf. I think that is what His Majesty is angry about."

"I..."

“Simply speaking, you do not have the right to put Luna to rest, and you also put her to rest here in humanity’s lands. In my opinion, His Majesty has every reason to be angry.” Castell then sighed softly before continuing, “We interact amicably, for the reason that you and His Majesty are very close. In reality, however, we belong to two different factions. You and His Majesty are family. You are his mother. No matter how angry he gets, you are still his mother. If you wish to mend your relationship, then you should allow me to send Luna’s remains to Troy City. If you like, we just need to leave a crown here in her place.”

The corner of Elizabeth’s mouth twitched a few times while she was looking at Castell. She then lowered her head and softly said, “I just wanted to avoid making my son angry... So I did something I shouldn’t have? I thought it would be fine if I bestowed Luna with the title of ‘Hero’... I never expected that my son didn’t want that... All right. It’s good for my son to have his own vassals. I shall approve. Send Luna’s remains to Troy City. Luna is my son’s personal servant. Alice is my personal bodyguard. Let’s commemorate them separately, then.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

=====

“Elizabeth doesn’t treat her relationship with Alice as just any other relationship, but a friendship. Alice has served Her Majesty from the beginning. She has been at Elizabeth’s side longer than you and Vyvyan have been together. Elizabeth is a very emotionally driven individual. She killed Alice, her only friend; therefore, she must be hurting a lot, too. Of course, the worst pain for her is that her good friend tried to kill her son.”

“Even if that’s the case, it doesn’t justify her putting them to rest together!!”

“You’re mistaken, Your Majesty.” Lorana sternly cut me off, “Elizabeth put them to rest together, because she holds them both in high regard. Do you know where their resting place is? They were put to rest in the royal family’s cemetery. Only members of the royal family may be put to rest there. Elizabeth didn’t mind Luna’s status and background. She allowed a personal servant, who she wasn’t even acquainted with, to be put to rest with her family and old friend with the same rights. Do you think that’s disrespectful and insulting?”

“But...”

“Your Majesty, you’re not angry about Luna being put to rest and the particulars. You’re angry, as you didn’t get to put her to rest. That’s the source of your hatred. You’re angry that Elizabeth took your chance to get revenge away from you, and now you’re angry that she took the right to put Luna to rest from you. You’re angry, because Elizabeth decided to do things to Luna without your input, which is something that you can’t forgive. And that’s because Luna is your hero, not Elizabeth’s. You feel guilty toward Luna and want to do something to console yourself, but Elizabeth took away all of your chances to do something. That’s why you’re infuriated.”

Lorana gave me a gentle knock on my forehead. She then stood up, “It’s not a huge issue in the first place. At most, it’s a mother and son quarrel, and then the son left. A mother took matters into her own hands without getting her son’s input first when he wanted to do something, thereby angering him, and that’s it. It’s not something unforgivable. I believe that Elizabeth will soon realise what she did wrong. When she does, go and put Luna to rest.”

“A mother and son quarrel.....”

“Yes. It’s just a minor matter. However, Luna’s death isn’t a minor matter. Your Majesty, if you can’t convince the people to obey you, this sort of thing will happen again. So hurry up and grow up, future King. Who’s going to stand up for you next time?”

“I won’t need someone to stand up for me again. In the future, I’ll stand up for myself!”

Ch. 42

There’s nobody to wake me up anymore, because the one who could wake me up is no longer here.

However, I wake up on time every morning with Nier lying next to me. Nier had my arm locked in hers as she took soft breaths. I touched my face and discovered traces of tears.

'I dreamt of Luna again last night. She looked so cheerful. Luna's smile was so bright. The sun in my dream was so bright, so why did I have traces of tears all over my face when I woke up? Why did I cry so painfully in my dream? Maybe it's because we're no longer together.'

'This isn't a mother and son quarrel. It wouldn't be an issue even if it was a mother and son quarrel. I argued a fair bit with Mom when I was young, but I wasn't arguing with Mom this time because I was wilful or didn't understand her; I was arguing with her, because of Luna. It's clear as day that Luna was brutally killed. Her heart got dug out for crying out loud. I can't even imagine how much it hurt when she died. Why did Alice get to die with a smile, be put to rest in the royal family's cemetery and enjoy the treatment of a hero? Are you telling me my child has to face her tombstone and call her a hero?'

'I can't take that. There's no way in hell I can accept that.'

'I hate her to the core. I want to grind her bone to powder, and then scatter it.'

'I can't kill Alice now, but I still want to completely annihilate her. I want to erase every single trace of her existence in this world. She can't feel it anymore. I want to make it, so that nobody will remember her in the future. I want to completely erase her meaning in life. I want everybody to remember Luna. I want them to remember the beauty that died for me.'

'I'd die to make that a reality. I don't intend to just sit here on my ass waiting for Mom to come and apologise. If that's what my plan was, I wouldn't have left. I must bring Luna back. I don't want anyone, but me, to send her home. I'm going to personally bring her home.'

'I'll make sure to bring her back if it's the last thing I do. I can't take this shit. Luna is my personal servant, my vassal and the girl I love. I honestly can't take this. If I just watch this all happen with a blank look on my face, then I'll still be the powerless version of myself.'

'I could traverse the desert, so I can march my army to the South. I need to do this even if I must pay the price with my life. Lorana was right. I am, indeed, angry that Mommy Elizabeth took away my right to mete out punishment, but I'm still going to go and do something, because I'm angry.'

I sat up and gently kissed Nier's cheek. I lightly ran my hand on Nier's

abdomen.

‘Sorry Nier. It’s not that I don’t love you or don’t want to be next to you, but there’s something that I must go and do. I have a gamble I need to make. If I can make it back, I’ll be sure to love you sincerely.’

“Sorry Nier, there are some things I have to go and resolve...”

I got dressed slowly. I’m much slower without Luna. I was able to sit up today; but nonetheless, I’m still feeling slightly weak.

‘I’ve made up my mind. I made up my mind when I returned to Troy City. It’s just that only now am I able to act on it.’

I stood up and lightly walked over to the door. I pulled it open and took one last look at Nier before gently shutting the door.

I didn’t see the tear that ran across Nier’s face...

“Your Highness, where are you going?”

As soon as I left the room, Lucia walked up to me in the corridor. I looked at her face, but didn’t reply. I, instead, pulled her into my embrace to hug her tightly. I gently stroked her head, and then kissed her forehead. She jerked her body then responded with a gentle hug without asking me anything further. She just tightly hugged me.

“Come back soon, my husband.”

“Ah, I know. I’ll be back.”

Lucia released me after a moment and wiped the corner of her eyes while looking at me. She then touched my chest and quietly said, “You haven’t recovered completely yet, so don’t overextend yourself. Also, if you die, I’ll never forgive you. I’ll raise our child then go looking for you, and then I’ll cling to you forever.”

“I know, I know...”

I kissed Lucia’s forehead one last time, and then went down the stairs. I resisted the urge to turn around multiple times. I descended the stairs without letting myself get distracted then walked out of the palace.

“Your Majesty!”

My guard unit was coincidentally gathered right now and just about to break off. Philes saluted me when he saw me. They regathered when they saw me and looked at me with gazes of excitement. I looked at my soldiers then looked at Philes and nodded.

“Did something happen?”

Philes was somewhat unsettled when he noticed that I looked very serious. I didn't answer him; instead, I turned to face the soldiers in front of me. I cleared my throat; then loudly declared, “Brothers, I don't know if you're tired or not, but we have our next target and need to head out now. Bring your weapons and get ready to march!”

They didn't hesitate for a moment. They responded loudly, “Roger!!”

“Your Majesty, where exactly are we going?!”

I turned my head to look at Philes, who was next to me, and replied, “To do battle.”

Philes lingered for a moment before saying, “Do battle... that is fine... but is this not a little bit too sudden? We do not know the enemy's numbers or their weapons... How are we supposed to fight like this...?”

“I'll answer those questions for you.”

I turned to face the soldiers in front and loudly announced, “Gentlemen, our target this time is the Royal Palace located in Hilles City to the south. They have a few hundred who we will be up against. Their main weapon is a long sword. All of them are skilled combatants. So let's go.”

“Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait!!”

Philes covered my mouth with his hand. He had shock written all over his face. He looked left and right nervously before exclaiming, “Your Majesty! Have you lost it?! Are you attacking Her Majesty?! This is treason! This is a serious crime! This is going overboard, don't you think?!”

“Who said that I'm rebelling against Her Majesty? I'm Her Majesty's son. Why would I attack my mom?”

“But you just said...”

“I’m talking about the Valkyries, get it?”

I clenched my teeth, and then looked at my soldiers with a violent look. In an aggressive voice I said, “That Valkyries killed my personal servant. They killed my one and only personal servant, and yet the culprit is enjoying the treatment of a hero in the royal family’s cemetery. I can’t accept it. I can’t accept somebody who made an attempt at my life and killed my personal servant to get off in such a carefree way. My personal servant, my Luna, is inside the royal family’s cemetery. That’s not where her resting place is. She’s my personal servant. I should be the one who puts her to rest! That Valkyrie should’ve been killed by me, but I didn’t get the chance to. I didn’t get the chance to kill her. Gentlemen, can you give me a hand? I’m not revolting, nor am I trying to harm Her Majesty. I just want to bring my Luna home. I want to grind the bones of the one who killed my Luna to dust and throw it into the winds! This is my bottom line! Nobody will get away with killing my people! Nobody! If someone tries to stop us, charge through them. If we come under attack, retaliate. We just have to slaughter our way back to the Royal Capital, storm the Royal Palace and bring my Luna back! That’s all I need!”

Philes looked at me with a blank expression in silence for a long time. Maybe what I said gave him too big of a shock, and he was still trying to process what I said.

“Of course, this isn’t an order, because what I said is a little too foolish. I know that you all worship Her Majesty, and I know that you don’t want to make enemies out of the royal family, so I’m begging you for your help this time. Of course, I’ll still, personally, go there even if you don’t help me. I’ll go there alone if I have to, in order to bring my Luna back!”

I looked at my silent soldiers and chuckled. I then turned to walk to the stables.

I wasn’t lying. Those were my honest thoughts.

‘I’ll go whether I have assistance or not. But I’m not going back there to apologise or cry. I’m going back there to storm the cemetery and rescue my Luna.’

Just as I mounted my horse and rode to the city entrance, I turned my head around to hear the sounds of horse hooves.

‘Nobody will stand up for me this time.’

‘From now on, I must stand up for myself!’

Ch. 43

“Your Majesty, are you not going to sleep?”

I turned around to look at Shusia and replied, “I’ll sit for a bit longer.”

“You should add some wood to the fire, then, or else you might get sick.”

“I won’t. I’m afraid of sleeping.”

I threw a piece of wood into the fire and watched the fire boldly envelop the piece of wood, then gradually burn the brown piece of wood into a black colour. I continued in a quiet voice, “I can’t sleep. When I sleep, I have dreams of nothing, but Luna’s smile. My heart aches so much when I wake up. I miss her so much. I miss her too much.”

Shusia sat down next to me. She looked at the fire and quietly asked, “If you do this, Her Majesty may not forgive you. Are you sure you want to do this? You handed over the map you struggled to obtain in the desert to keep your life, but you are marching to your own death this time. Is it worth it?”

“I’m not marching to my own death. I’m just going to pick up Luna to bring her home, and that’s all. The royal family’s cemetery is my family’s cemetery. Do I need to barge in?”

I then looked at her, “It’s just that I need to deal with the Valkyries. The Valkyries are my mom’s guards, not my guards. I won’t make compromises with them this time. If they stop me, your mission will be to break their defences. If they attack us, retaliate.”

“Your Majesty...”

“If Mom can put someone who killed my personal servant to rest, then I can

kill the Valkyries. It's the same. Mommy Elizabeth's actions this time infuriate me to no end. She only remembered her friendship with Alice and her contributions, but only felt apologetic to me. I don't need an apology. I want vengeance. All I want is for those who deserve to die, dead, and those who deserved to be buried, buried.

"Uhm, that is true. However, you can rest assured Your Majesty. We are loyal to you, too, the same way I am a Valkyrie. I would never have known the world was so large without you and Philes. I am very happy to be able to see so much of the world."

"That's good, then. The one thing I am most consoled about is that I still have all of you by my side. As long as I still have you all, I still have everything. I'm able to bring Luna home, because I have all of you."

"We will send her off together with you after we bring her back. We saw Miss Luna as our senior, and the personal servant of our master, the one who was closest to our master," Shusia then stood up and looked toward the south. She looked at the capital that was so close to us now and suggested, "You should have a good sleep Your Majesty. We will arrive at the Royal Capital tomorrow."

"Ah, I know."

I looked over in the direction of the Royal Palace then threw the tree branch in my hand into the fire. I looked at the Royal Capital in the darkness as I took steady breaths. I gently touched my handgun in my arms.

'This is my third or fourth time travelling this road now. Every time I travelled this road, I travelled it soaked in blood and surrounded by malicious schemes.'

'This time, I'll do it again.'

Clack.

I placed my loaded handgun aside. All that was left to do was wait to see if there's a chance to fire the bullets tomorrow now.

=====

"Look, it's His Majesty..."

Gerald returned to his senses when the soldier next to him bumped him. He

looked at the cavalry unit ahead of him feeling slightly confused. The cavalry unit didn't care that the street was crowded. They charged through the crowds in the direction of the Royal Palace. He wondered, "His Majesty's unit... But why are they in such a rush...? Did something happen again..."

"Didn't you say that you hooked up with His Majesty's younger sister? Don't you have any news?"

"I didn't... It was just a coincidence... I haven't even received the reward I was told I'd get... I wonder when I'll receive it."

"Gerald touched the tip of his nose, and then said, "Let's go. Work finishes after our daytime patrol. I want to go home to nap in the afternoon. Let's go drink at night."

"Your Majesty???"

The guards at the entrance were surprised to see me. They quickly pulled open the doors to the Royal Palace. I ignored the stableman, who came up to take the reins, and continued charging in. The guards watched me charge into the palace with a stupefied look. It's forbidden to ride horses in the palace, but they didn't dare to stop us.

=====

Castell pushed Her Majesty's door open in a rush. The Empress turned around and asked him, "Did something happen outside?"

After a moment of hesitation, he replied, "His Majesty has returned."

Elizabeth swiftly stood up and in an excited tone asked, "What!?!? He's back?! I'm going personally to welcome him! Where is he now?! Where's my son?!"

"Erm... inside the cemetery at the mountain in the rear....."

Castell awkwardly replied, "His Majesty brought his guard unit back and stormed straight into the cemetery... He is currently fighting with the Valkyries, and His Majesty is not showing any signs of backing down. His guard unit and the Valkyries are engaged in battle. The Valkyries have suffered losses!"

"He stormed into the cemetery?!" The Empress was shocked. She then sat back down into her chair and in a shocked tone added, "Is he crazy? Bringing

men and weapons into the Royal Palace... Doesn't that mean that he's revolting...?"

"If His Majesty wanted to revolt, he should be charging into the inner court and not the cemetery. I think that His Majesty's goal is to bring Luna's remains back, and if possible, I think he will destroy Alice's grave. His Majesty is absolutely serious this time. There is no stopping him."

"You head over first, Castell. I'll go to the cemetery right after."

The Empress then stood up; she looked down at her sleepwear and continued, "Since I'm facing my son this time, I'll need to go face him fully equipped. I angered him this time. I'll let him vent all of his anger at me regardless of how much that may be."

=====

I took big strides forward, stepping over the mud and stone path. I looked at the marble wall in front of me. My guards behind me reloaded their guns and followed me. The Valkyries retreated. There were the corpses of a few Valkyries on the ground. I didn't get soft-hearted. I fired at the Valkyries who blocked our path.

"Get lost if you don't want to die. This is my family's royal family cemetery. You're just my mom's guards. What right do you have to stop me from entering?! This is my family's cemetery, and you're stopping me from entering?! If you want a fight, bring it on! Let's see what's faster, my gun or your swords."

"Your Majesty, the cemetery is a sacred place..."

"This is my place!"

I finally stepped into the vicinity of the cemetery. I glared at the Valkyries in front of me furiously and thundered, "This is my place! This is my family's cemetery! I need to get your approval before I enter my own family's cemetery now?! You're just a group of dogs! Now piss off the lot of you!"

My guard unit and I paid no heed to the expressions and swords of the Valkyries. They fearfully looked at us as we pushed them back step by step.

'I realise it now.'

'In reality, the Valkyries are weakest when they're facing me.'

'I've killed for Luna before, so I don't mind killing another. '

'I won't mind killing a few more!'

Ch. 44

Nobody dared to stop my gun.

There's no doubt that the Valkyries are, indeed, brave; however, the Empress seriously cleaned up the Valkyrie squad after the revolt, so there are virtually no more Valkyries who dare to give me attitude. The Valkyries in front of me right now must be the original substitutes. They were very afraid of me. Despite them holding swords, not one of them dared to approach me to stop me.

It didn't take me much effort to find Luna and Alice's graves. Their tombs were placed together. In front were two stones with their merits carved onto it. I squatted down and gently stroked Luna's tombstone. The drawing of Luna on her tombstone was a picture of her smiling brightly.

'It's impossible.'

'It's impossible for Luna to smile this way again. She can only smile so brightly when I'm with her. She's next to the person who killed her right now, so how could she possibly smile? Luna can't possibly smile like that when Alice is next to her.'

'But I've come, Luna. I'm by your side now. I'm right in front of you. Let's go home this time.'

I took the shovel handed to me. I swung it and began shovelling the dirt up. The Valkyries had us surrounded. My guards watched them with their weapons in hand. Philes and Shusia exchanged glances. They then said, "Your Majesty, let us help..."

"No, I want to personally bring Luna home."

I turned them down and continued shovelling. I don't want anybody to help me. Luna stood before Alice without anyone to help her, so I want to personally bring her home this time. I didn't get to see her off but I must bring her home from Alice's side. I want her to be with me.

I don't know how long I dug for, but I finally dug the grave up. I felt my shovel hit something hard. I cleared the dirt around away and finally revealed Luna's black casket inside.

It was a long rectangular casket. This sort of thing is something I should only see decades from now.

Philes and a few others helped me lift it out. I picked up a crowbar by the side and violently smashed the casket with it. I noticed that my tears were already dripping onto the wooden casket with my sweat. There was a layer of ash on it.

'How long has it been since I saw Luna's face? Since when did her expression when she smiled and her brown eyes only exist in my memories? As a matter of fact, her smile had begun to fade in my memories.'

I yanked the long nails out of the wooden casket then pushed the lid open and kicked it aside.

Luna was sound asleep inside.

Luna's body had been repaired. The wounds on her face had been covered. Luna wore her usual maid uniform. She had her two hands placed on her chest. Her two hands were white, slender and smooth as I remembered. She had her eyes shut and even her eyelashes remained gentle as a butterfly flapping its wings gently. Her soft and pink lips were slightly curled up into a smile as if she was having a dream she didn't want to wake up from.

"Luna..."

I don't know since when my sobs became silent.

I tightly gripped the edge of the casket as my tears fell down onto her face and formed a sad rainbow. My body quivered with pain as I looked at Luna. My heart felt as if it was being dug out while my nerves and muscles were being slashed at over and over. I looked at Luna's face, her face I was so familiar with, yet would never get to see smile again. I bit down on my lip in a desperate

attempt to hold back my urge to wail.

I knelt on the ground with Luna in my arms. Luna's organs had been removed, thereby making her feel as light as a sheet of paper. Luna leaned rested in my arms similarly to when I carried up her in the desert. I gently hugged her. I was afraid that I would ruin her beautiful dream. I leaned down and kissed her forehead. As I wept, I said, "Let's go, Luna... Let's go home... I'll take you home... I'll definitely... send you home..."

A gentle breeze blew by, making her hair and eyelashes move similarly to a dark red ripple. In this very moment, I felt an odd eager sensation. I was eager to see Luna open her eyes then smile and greet me as she always did.

"Good morning, Your Majesty....."

'I won't... ever hear her greet me again...'

I trembled as I stood up. I held Luna's head and looked toward Alice's tombstone. I gave it a violent kick, and then another. After I staggered, I regained my balance, and then resumed kicking it. All of the nerves in my legs yelled at me to stop, and I knew that I couldn't destroy it with my leg, but I still wanted to kick it. I was carrying Luna, so I wanted to make sure I killed her!

"That's enough, that's enough, Your Majesty."

Philes gently pulled me back from behind. I huffed and puffed as I looked at the smile Alice gave me. I handed Luna over to Philes then picked up the shovel to the side and looked to the picture of Alice on the tombstone.

"Aaaaarrrgghh!!"

I cried out similarly a wild beast as a human. You only need enough hatred to turn into a wild beast, too.

Bits of stone flew into the air. Alice's portrait had been completely torn up by me. I kicked the little picture of her head flying away then threw the spade away. I picked up my handgun and emptied all of my bullets into her pile of dirt covering her.

"That's enough, Your Majesty... That's enough, isn't it?!"

Philes grabbed me, who was about to pick up the shovel to dig up Alice's

grave. I panted and intently stared at the portrait. It was like something was ablaze in my chest and spreading to every inch of my veins. I couldn't personally kill her, but I'm going to make sure she can't receive the treatment a hero receives.

"If you do not leave, you and Her Majesty may run into each other. How will you expl-"

"Fuck the explanation..."

I huffed and puffed as I turned around to face Philes. Philes wore a shocked expression and took two steps back out of fear. I wiped the corner of my mouth then looked toward the direction of the inner court with a violent gaze, "I don't give a damn if the Empress comes. I don't give a damn who comes. I've got Luna with me now, and I'll never hand her over. If the Empress stops me, I'll kill her. If Vyvyan stops me, I'll kill Vyvyan. Luna is my personal servant, and no soul can stop me from taking her home! No one! I'm not afraid to die. If I dared to bring you all here, I'm prepared to never return alive!"

"Your Majesty, what are you doing?! Were we not just going to take Luna home?!"

"Yeah, that's why I won't accept any suggestions or listen to anyone. I'll kill anyone who dares stop us from going home!"

"Your Majesty! Your Majesty!"

I saw a familiar silhouette come running over from the entrance. I silently reloaded my handgun while looking at him as I waited for him to arrive before me.

"Your Majesty, please wait for a while, Her Majesty will be here immediately."

"Castell." I stood up and looked at Castell, who was panting, and coldly said, "Head back and inform Her Majesty that I won't stay. I'm taking Luna home now. I won't give up no matter who comes to stop me. If you're here to stop me, then you'll have to step over my corpse!"

“Your Majesty, calm down. This matter is actually not that serious. It turned out this way, because you refused to talk to Her Majesty properly.”

“Fuck off with that bullshit! What good will calming down do me?! Will calming down bring my Luna back to life?! Will calming down change Her Majesty’s mind?! Calm down? You want me to calm down?! Alice killed my personal servant, and Her Majesty is just going to sweep that under the rug?! She’s going to just sweep this under the rug, because Alice who’s important to her was the one who killed my personal servant?! What about me, then?! Am I unimportant to her?!”

I yelled at Castell’s face with an aggressive glare. I really wanted to flatten his face with my fist. I really wanted to kill Her Majesty’s personal attendant in front of her. I wanted her to taste the feeling of losing her personal attendant. I wanted her to also know what pain is.

“Your Majesty! You have gone too far! You are Her Majesty’s most important son, but Alice is also her most important friend and bodyguard!”

“Fuck off! I’ve heard this shit countless times already!” I shoved Castell off, and then aimed my gun at his forehead and roared, “I don’t give a rat’s ass what Her Majesty thinks of Alice! However much Alice is loyal to Her Majesty is directed to Her Majesty. It has nothing to do with me. From my perspective, she’s just a demented murderer! A traitor who commits all evils! I came today to take my personal servant home and to punish the traitor! You think you’re in any position to be speaking out?! Either bring the Empress here or fuck off!”

Castell staggered two steps back. He then looked at the gun barrel at his head and took in a deep breath. Castell is Castell, after all. It’s hard to threaten him even with death. He gently cleared his throat then adjusted his collar, “Your Majesty, Her Majesty is your mother no matter what the case is. I can guarantee that Alice’s attempt at your life was not Her Majesty’s idea. Your Majesty, I can understand how you are feeling at the moment. You cannot comprehend Her Majesty’s way of handling it; therefore, Her Majesty is showing acquiescence to your actions. However, this is not a reason for you to refuse to speak to Her Majesty. You and Her Majesty both need to calm down and have a proper talk. We were planning to send Luna’s remains to you even if you did not come.”

“That’s enough, Castell. Step down.”

A voice then came from behind Castell. Castell froze up and so did I. I then lowered my gun. Castell made way and the Empress looked at me with a cold gaze. She was in full gear with the Elven King sword drawn and shining.

My guard unit froze up and looked at me a little hesitantly. They weren’t sure if they were supposed to salute her or not.

‘According to what Lorana said, our business is just a mother and son quarrel. I am, without question, enraged, but it’s not directed at Mom. Mom didn’t plot to take my life, and she took Alice’s head; but nonetheless, her handling of the matters after the incident enraged me. But that’s all.’

‘The one I hated most was Alice, alone.’

The Empress walked up to me. She looked at the gun in my hand and at the mess behind me. She let out a long sigh, “Son, this is the royal family’s cemetery. Inside here are your ancestors, which make them my ancestors, too. Even I can’t behave insolently here, yet you brought weapons into here to rampage. This is just unseemly.”

“I wouldn’t have had to do this if you didn’t make mistakes in the first place.”

I fearlessly looked at her black eyes.

Elizabeth smiled bitterly, “Was I wrong...? Mommy makes mistakes now and then, too. Mommy was, indeed, wrong. From your point of view, making Alice a hero is a very stupid action that also ridicules you, right? Mommy made a mistake there. Perhaps Mommy didn’t consider your feelings, because Mommy has never been by your side. Mommy understands that now. Putting Alice to rest as a hero is an insult to you. To Mommy, however, Mommy’s Valkyries and Vassals, Alice’s loyalty is her glory and honour. Alice isn’t important to you; however, she is very important to Mommy.”

I looked at Mom with my teeth clenched and retorted, “What about compared to me then?! How does Alice compare to me?! I’m your son! You went and considered Alice’s feelings, but not mine!!”

“That’s where Mommy went wrong. Mommy... Mommy wasn’t a good mother to begin with.”

Elizabeth lowered the tip of her sword. She looked at the jewels on her sword and spaced out. She then continued, “Mommy has always been called an Empress and been treated as a god of battle. Mommy has always been killing on battlefields, sorting out major and minor matters. Mommy, Mommy never had a chance to be a mother. Didn’t Mommy mention that Mommy feels an empty feeling whenever Mommy looks at you? Mommy neglected your feelings things this time. Mommy was wrong. Mommy really loves you, but Mommy is still too idiotic and clumsy.”

Elizabeth lowered her head and looked at me as though she was pleading me. She went on, “Mommy knows Mommy was wrong now. Mommy will be considerate of your feelings. Mommy will move Alice’s grave elsewhere. Mommy promises to have all the officials in charge of recording history to write everything Alice did and remove her title as a Hero. However, Mommy hopes that you will stop here. Please, my son, please let Mommy have a space to remember Mommy’s old friend. She was Mommy’s only friend, and she’s no longer here... Mommy really doesn’t wish to see Mommy’s old friend’s corpse hung on the city wall... This is Mommy’s only request. Son, can you let Mommy do that...?”

“I only have one personal servant, too, and she is no longer here, either...”

I clenched my teeth as I looked at Mom’s expression that showed she was on the verge of tears.

‘While I’m still fuming, I really can’t find it in me to vent it on my mom standing before me. Mom has already made a big compromise by relocating Alice’s grave. Though she didn’t punish Alice, I, at least, won’t have to see that piece of shit that killed Luna placed next to her. Mom can commemorate her if she wants. Mom doesn’t understand the pain I feel from Alice taking Luna from me. That pain is a sufficient reason for me to forbid anything to do with Alice appearing in front of me again.’

“Now after that, there’s one more thing Mommy has to do.”

Mom looked at me again. She swiftly raised her sword up and rested it against my neck. She looked at me with an indifferent gaze. I could feel her cold blade on my neck. I looked at her with a blank look. She looked back at me and coldly

reprimanded me, “You may be Mommy’s son, but Mommy cannot allow you to barge into the royal family’s cemetery recklessly and kill so many Valkyries for no rhyme or reason. Therefore, Mommy will punish you, as well. You can’t deny these mistakes of yours, can you? Or did you want to gamble your life and the lives of those behind you to launch a revolt to the end?”

“Mom, you just...”

“That was that, and this is this. Mommy has acknowledged Mommy’s faults and has remedied them. But son, shouldn’t you bear the consequences of your mistakes, too?

Mom withdrew her sword then looked at me and coldly said, “Mommy will let you take Luna’s remains back to Troy City to put her to rest first. Luna is your personal servant, so mommy won’t get involved with how you decide to do that, but once you’re done, you need to come back here and be grounded here for one month as punishment. You will only be permitted to stay in the palace for the month. And, mommy will give you a spanking in a bit!”

‘I can understand the first part, but what the hell is with that last part?!’

‘Isn’t this a little troubling...? How did such a weird atmosphere come about in such a serious situation?! Mom, did your thinking just veer completely off track?!’

Ch. 46

‘As opposed to saying that my anger went away, it would be more accurate to say that I randomly got brought back.’

‘Am I too young or is Mom too sly? She admitted her faults right as soon as she appeared, leaving me speechless. She then named my faults, causing me to lose momentum. She then forcefully brought me back to the outer court, and then put me under house arrest. My guard unit got sent to stay at the Valkyries’ station to go and flirt with them...’

‘They thought my relationship with Mom had gone back to the positive way it

was before and felt relieved. As soon as they heard they could leave, they really left... They really did...'

'Though I'm under house arrest, Her Majesty didn't have her Valkyries protect me. It looks as though Mommy Elizabeth pays a lot of attention to the Valkyries now after that incident. She didn't arrange for any guards to protect me. Instead, she had Philes and Shusia bring a few others to stay with me under the pretext of protecting me.'

'So why did I say I was under house arrest you ask? That's because my horse is missing! I went to the stables to look for my horse, but there wasn't a single one there. That's Mom's trick to keep me here. I'm now wondering if she's going to take my shoes away, too. I could just leave and look for a horse to leave this place; however, I do want to have a proper talk with Mom, too. Therefore, I decided to stay here for a while longer.'

'We still need to make some preparations to transport Luna home. I can't just carry her back the whole way. Of course, if that's what I must resort to, then so be it. I need to prepare a better casket for her. and then transport her back to Troy City via horse carriage. She's gone through so much, so I want to let her, at least, be able to relax on her last journey.'

I gently held Luna's freezing hands in my hands. I sat next to the bed that she was lying on and looked at her cheeks.

'Luna still looks so beautiful and pitiful. I've already done my very best to give Luna the just treatment she deserves. Besides not being able to personally avenge her, I've done everything that I can. But despite that, the immense guilt and sadness I feel when I hold her hands hasn't reduced at all.'

'It's as though everything I did was meaningless.'

"Luna... Luna... Was I worth it...? Was I worth you throwing your life away for...?"

I wiped my tears off my face and tightened my grip on Luna's hand. Luna, however, couldn't hold my hand again. Her expression didn't even change. I looked at her smile and gently stroked her lips.

'If I could've let Luna depart with this expression, I wouldn't be feeling so sad

right now.'

'Luna died for me. She died because of me. If I was strong enough, Luna wouldn't have met with this sort of fate. If I was strong enough, I wouldn't have had to return here, and I wouldn't have to succeed Her Majesty's throne. I could establish my own empire. Succeeding Her Majesty's empire will only attract more and more and more schemes and sinister plots '

'I'm sick of it already. I am honestly sick of it already. I've tried so hard already, yet Castor still ended up swimming in their own blood. I did what I did to protect them. But humans always like to do things they themselves perceive to be correct.'

'I can't protect others nor can I conquer others. My kindness is meaningless to these people; meanwhile, they can take everyone I love from me.'

'I don't want Mom's empire. Her presence has been engraved deeply into this empire. Mom shines too brightly. I believe that even more people would be stating that I'm unworthy of succeeding this empire had I not gone all out to save it once. I really don't want to fight with Mom's supporters. I don't want to get into a political war. I want my own country. I want my own empire. I want my own loyal people and my own power.'

'Troy City is too small for me. I'm not longer after a city, but a region with my power. I want a grand empire similar to Mom's. I don't want to succeed hers. That way, everybody will change their opinion of me.'

'If I could have done that, Luna wouldn't have died. She'd still be by my side right now.'

'If possible, I really want to kiss Luna's lips again, hold her hands again and hold her beautiful, yet weak body again.'

'Unfortunately, it's impossible now.'

"Luna, let's go home. I'll take you home. I think that the sea of flowers suits you more. I'll take you to the sea of flowers in the village that you were born in and grew up in. I'll always come to see you and the flowers bloom."

I gently stroked Luna's forehead and struggled to my feet as though I exited my memories in the past and my love for Luna. I let go and returned her hand

to her chest.

‘This isn’t all that I can do for Luna. Since Alice fought so hard for the Valkyries, I’ll ruin what she worked so hard to create.’

‘I said it before. I couldn’t kill Alice, so I’ll destroy her, instead. I want to make it so that nobody will remember her in the future. I want her to vanish from this world without a trace.’

‘My next step is to destroy the Valkyries. Such a squad shouldn’t continue to exist. The Valkyries have gained too much power. They’ve gained so much power that they can bring harm to anyone in the Empress’ absence. I must change them into a simple guard unit from now on. I won’t let another Alice appear.’

‘Further, I want Alice to know that I, personally, destroyed the Valkyries that she worked so hard all her life nurturing!’

‘I’m not angry with Her Majesty’s faults, but I will forever remember what you did Alice. I’ll remember it for life. I’ll never go to visit your grave, and I won’t touch anything you were involved with. My descendants will never be named Alice. ‘

‘Once I’m dead, I’ll go to where you are and personally kill you again!’

‘I’ll never forget this grudge.’

Philes walked in and made a small bow to me, “Your Majesty, Miss Luna’s new casket is ready. Do you want to put Miss Luna inside now?”

“Ah, I’ll do it myself.”

I nodded then carried Luna up and headed outside. The guards in charge of transporting her stood on both sides of the corridor and solemnly welcomed Luna and I who came out. They wore formal robes and stood next to us. They were silent as the forest that guards us. The black horse carriage was parked at the entrance with an open casket set on an incline behind it, revealing the soft-looking cloth inside.

I gently placed Luna inside, and then adjusted her posture. I then gave them my order, “Don’t place any bouquets. The bouquets here are completely

meaningless to her. I will personally fill it up with flowers. You just need to put the lid on properly first.”

“Understood!”

“So, Your Majesty, when are we heading out? Are we leaving first?”

“I can’t go even if I want to right now. I need to speak to Her Majesty one last time. We’re leaving together for sure. As I mentioned, I want to *personally* bring Luna home.”

I touched the black casket then turned around and walked toward the inner court.

Ch. 47

I ignored Castell when I arrived at the inner court.

‘Castell is technically a victim in this incident, but at the same time, he didn’t report it despite being aware of it. Had he told us everything he knew from the start, all of that could’ve been avoided. Hence, I don’t have any positive feelings for him. If anything, I resent him. Furthermore, he’s loyal to the Empress, not me, so I don’t need to pretend for his sake.’

I entered Mommy Elizabeth’s room and spotted her sitting on her bed, looking out the window with a slightly nervous look. She smiled then tapped her thighs, “Come here, Son. What should be done must be done. You did storm into the royal family’s cemetery for no good reason, damaged a grave and killed Valkyries. Like you, Mommy is very angry, too, so get over here and lie on Mommy’s thigh!”

‘You’re not angry, are you?! What part of you shows that you’re angry?!’

“I think I shouldn’t, Mom... I... I know I was wrong now... I shouldn’t have been so impulsive. But Mom, you were in the wrong first. Can’t I be a little wilful, too...?”

“They’re two different things. Just because others commit a mistake, that doesn’t make it a reason for you to commit a mistake, as well, Son.” Mom

looked at me. She pat her thigh again while looking anxious. She continued, “Hurry up and come here, Son. Mommy could acknowledge Mommy was wrong in front of so many people, so can’t you acknowledge you were wrong in front of Mommy? And isn’t it very normal for a mother to spank her son?”

“Not when I’m at this age!”

“Who said that?! Come here, Son; otherwise, I’ll come over and forcefully pull you into my embrace!”

“Don’t, don’t, don’t. I’ll come over!”

There was no way I was going to be able to escape Mom. I had to reluctantly go over to her.

‘After all, I can’t resist against Mom now. If Mom didn’t apologise, not only would I not have been able to take Luna out, I would also be locked up here. The fact that Mom could understand me and make such a big compromise proves that Mom still loves me.’

I lay down on mom’s thigh and she softly giggled. She then quickly turned me over to pull me tightly into her arms, and then put me down on the bed. I couldn’t react in time, so she successfully put me on the bed. Mom gave me a tight back hug and rested her head on my back. She took in a deep breath and in her soft voice pleaded, “Don’t leave Mommy, Son... Please... don’t leave Mommy... When you’re not here... Mommy... Mommy feels so lonely... so... so lonely...”

I didn’t respond. I just lay there silently while she sobbed with me in her arms. She said, “Mommy can’t bear to hit you... Mommy feels really sorry for you, too... How can Mommy not be hurting when you’re hurting so much...? But Mommy... Mommy is hurting a lot, too...”

I took in a deep breath. In a soft but firm voice, I replied, “Mom, I know. It’s just that I honestly can’t accept this. If I make compromises this time and let Alice be placed next to Luna, not to mention enjoying the status of a hero, I’ll be betraying Luna when I put her to rest, as well as all those who devote their loyalty to me.”

“Uhm, Mommy didn’t consider your feelings when handling it. Mommy feels

sorry for you, too.”

Mom gently stroked the back of my hand. That was where Alice stabbed me with her dagger. It bled uncontrollably until Vyvyan came. Vyvyan lost it when she saw it. If Elizabeth didn’t desperately stop her, Vyvyan would’ve dismantled her hand.

“Does it still hurt?”

“Not anymore... but my heart still aches a lot... I really miss Luna... I really do. I miss her so much.”

I tightly clenched my fist. Mom gently stroked my fist and next to my ear, whispered, “Mommy feels the same way with Alice... That’s why Mommy doesn’t want her to end up with the crime of being a traitor. Son, if your heart aches, come with Mommy.”

Mom sat up, and then moved about in her room. I was stunned to see a secret passageway appear behind the bookshelf. The stench of blood came from it, and I could feel the humidity from there. Mom looked at me and said, “Come, my son. Pick up the sword on the table. If you still feel upset about not being able to get revenge, let Mommy show you something in here for you to vent.”

I stood up and picked up the sword on the table. This is Mom’s sword. I scanned it with curiosity. It seemed to still have the warmth of Mom’s hands on it. Mom grabbed a light from the side then grabbed hold of my hand, and we descended together.

The further down we went, the more prominent the stench of blood and rotten stuff became. Mom’s light looked as though it was getting absorbed by this thick moss. It was sticky under my feet. I really don’t want to know what caused this marshiness.

I heard the sound of chains sliding. The iron door in front of us opened. I saw a bunch of people lying scattered all over on the ground, groaning and moaning underneath the sunset shade of light.

“These are all the people involved in the incident.”

Mom led me across in an indifferent manner. She grabbed one the head of

one of the individuals. It was a familiar face that I saw. He was the guy who tried to seduce Nier at the dance ball. Mom said, “This is that minister’s son. I’ve declared them dead to the public, but I think that you want to kill him more than I do. Also, this is his wife, these are his friends, and these are his mistresses. His teacher’s entire family is here. His servants are over there. Mommy has brought all those related to him here. This is...”

“The King of Castor.”

I looked at the face of a kid, who was barely breathing, causing him to be unable to even cry. I remarked, “He’s just a kid.”

“But Castor’s Regent tried to kill my son! All of the members of Castor’s royal family have been killed. I spared him for you.”

“This, here, is Prince Bagrott. His wife is on the other side.”

I looked at the familiar and unfamiliar faces before me. Mom kicked away the individual in front of her and told me, “I spared none of those from the vassal states that were involved with the incident. I even rewarded Nara and Karana. I once led the entire empire’s military to war for you, so Mommy could slaughter an entire city for you this time. Castor’s shores should be congested with corpses by now. Mommy, personally, killed Alice; as a consequence, you couldn’t, personally, get revenge. You can vent your anger on these people, right? But once you’ve killed them, remember to keep their heads. We’ll send their bodies back. We’ll send their limbs out to all corners of the empire to warn everyone.”

Mom had no pity in her eyes. Her eyes were filled with fury and disdain.

‘It appears that Mom’s anger is the same. Nobody who hurt me is getting away.’

I nodded.

‘The true target of my anger wasn’t these people. The true target of my anger was the one who killed my Luna.’

‘But I’m mad right now and they were accomplices, so they contributed to Luna’s death.’

“Thank you, Mom.”

I drew the long sword in my hand. The Elven King sword reflected the light from the sunset.

‘This is the second time I picked up a sword. I killed Mera the first time I picked up a sword. That time, I killed her, because she, too, revolted. I’m picking up a sword again for the same reason this time, except this time, I won’t have any pity or reluctance!’

Ch. 48

I lowered my sword. The blood above formed a river of blood, making every step I took leave behind the stench of blood.

‘I’ve learned a lot of things this time.’

‘For instance, how many people I can kill with my stamina.’

I huffed and puffed as walked up to the last man.

‘Who is this again? I can’t remember. Is he a King or a lord? I don’t remember, nor do I care. How’s he any different to the dismembered corpses behind me? He looks terrified and my sword is raised high up. There’s nothing different.’

I looked at his neck. My expression remained the same.

‘I felt that my conscience was being tortured when I killed the first person. I felt sick when I killed the second person. After I killed the third person, I had an odd feeling. When I killed the fourth and fifth person, I felt the urge to toy with them. When I killed the sixth, seventh and eighth, I laughed manically. Now for this last one. I no longer feel any emotion.’

I swung my blade emotionlessly as if I was slicing bread with a knife.

The Elven King sword is incredibly sharp. It cuts through skin, flesh and bone as smooth as butter. My target’s terrified expression didn’t change after I had lopped off one of his arms.

Just as he was about to scream, I smashed his mouth with the sword handle,

breaking his teeth before I chopped his leg off.

He didn't cry out when I chopped his leg off, because he had already passed out due to pain. That's fine with me. I won't have to look at his disgusting eyes again. I quickly and smoothly dismembered him thereafter, with my last swing separating his head from his body.

'It's over.'

'It's all over now.'

I panted as I wiped my sweat off my forehead, only to find my hand was stained with blood.

'How much blood am I drenched in? I can't smell the irritating smell of blood anymore.'

'Was it because a cool breeze blew by or was it because I had habituated to the stench of blood?'

I leaned on the Elven King sword. The blood had condensed on the originally smooth blade. Blood dripped into the puddles of blood. Everywhere I stepped, I stepped into blood.

'How many people did I kill?'

'I don't know. There's too many to count. But I've killed everyone here.'

I turned my head around to see Mom throw Castor's King's small body aside as if she was throwing a broken doll away. I straightened up my torso and continued panting. I licked the blood at the corner of my mouth, "I didn't want to kill the kid. He's just a kid. I don't think he had anything to do with it."

Elizabeth looked at me and shook her head. She replied, "His mother tried to kill my child, so I killed her child. It's a fair exchange. If we must name a connection, he just had a mother he shouldn't have had."

I snickered.

'How many did I kill before I became numb to it? I don't know, but I don't care anymore. These people all played a part in Luna's death, so they all have to die. All of them had to die. They killed my Luna, so I had to kill them, too. That's revenge. Revenge is addicting. How happy would I have been if I got to take

Alice's head back there?'

"Come here, my son."

Elizabeth faced me and opened her arms. I walked over, and she came up to me to hug me tightly. She looked at my face, and then leaned in to lick the sticky blood on my face. The tip of her tongue slid over every inch of my nerves. After she licked the blood on my face, she put her tongue with blood on it into my mouth.

The taste of blood and warmth spread in my mouth. I shut my eyes and savoured the irritating, yet stimulating taste of blood. I tightly hugged Elizabeth.

'I now understand why couples who die together have particular good relationships. It's because the taste of blood is a couple's best aphrodisiac.'

"Son, remember this taste. This is the taste of revenge."

Elizabeth released me, and then licked the traces of blood at the corners of her mouth. She then looked into my eyes and softly added, "Mommy's taste of revenge carries the fragrant taste of wine. Our vengeance carries a very strong stench of blood. You really are Mommy's child. Mommy would be a little doubtful if we were in the past, but seeing your eyes now, Mommy no longer suspects it. You are Mommy's child without question. Mommy once used the skull of Mommy's enemy to drink wine. You can taste how revenge tastes this time, right?"

I looked at Elizabeth and clenched my teeth, "Unfortunately, I didn't get to, personally, behead Alice. What I want to do most right now is kill Alice."

Elizabeth gently stroked my cheek then responded softly, "You can't kill Alice now, my son. If you want to become an Emperor, you need to eliminate all those who want to harm your people. Mommy used to worry that you might not have that courage. But are you still afraid of killing people?"

"..."

I didn't reply. I just looked at the blood on the ground without uttering a word.

'Yes, I'm no longer worried about killing people anymore. The joy of revenge is

overwhelmingly amazing. The feeling of holding the Elven King sword right now didn't feel weird. It felt as though I've held it for a long time already. It feels as though it's a part of my arm. I may have been averse to killing people in the past, but I no longer mind it.'

'Killing people is as simple as slicing bread.'

I only discovered my clothes were completely stained with blood once Elizabeth and I returned to the outside together. The blood stained the red carpet. Elizabeth looked at me, smiled and said, "Son, go and take a bath before you head out. However, don't forget that you will be grounded for one month, so come back after you put Luna to rest."

"Uhm."

I nodded then looked at Elizabeth. I took in a deep breath and said, "Mom, there's one more thing I hope that I can get your approval for."

"What?"

I looked at Elizabeth's eye and made my request in a particularly serious tone, "Please make Nier Galadriel Rosvenor the next captain of the Valkyries."

"Oh?" Elizabeth paused for a bit then chuckled, "You want to get involved with Mommy's Valkyries? The Valkyries aren't Alice's everything. Some of the Valkyries died protecting you."

I looked at Mom and sternly said, "Mom, I don't intend to break up the Valkyries. I just want Nier to become the new captain of the Valkyrie squad. Mom, you've lost your personal bodyguard, so I shall protect you from now! If this palace is your cage, I'll definitely break it!"

Elizabeth looked at me with astonishment. She suddenly extended her arms out and pulled me tightly into her arms. She stroked my back and sniffled next to my ear. She then softly said, "Thank you... Thank you... Son... Inard and Alice were the only ones who ever said they would protect me... This time, my son has told me he'll protect me... Uhm, uhm, Mommy approves... Mommy will be waiting for you... Mommy will be waiting for you to break this cage..."

Ch. 49

After taking a bath and getting changed, I'm now getting ready to return to Troy City.

My trip here this time wasn't in vain. Seeing those heads hung on the city wall made me feel particularly good. It's just that the most important one was missing. But whatever, I've managed to pick Luna up and avenge her while I was at it, so the trip wasn't for naught.

That was my goal at the start and I have accomplished it now. Further, I have obtained the most crucial tool.

The most crucial tool I speak of is the Elven King's sword. Mommy Elizabeth gave me the Elven King's sword this time, and the most important thing, which is the letter of appointment. The name below where it says "Captain of the Valkyrie Guard Unit" is Nier Galadriel Rosvenor. Once Nier becomes the captain of the Valkyrie squad, I don't need to worry about that happening again; plus, my relationship with Nier will guarantee Her Majesty's safety.

I can't allow such a dangerous power to exist next to me again, although I admit that I really do want to totally destroy the Valkyries. I wouldn't be able to protect Elizabeth if I did that, though. Therefore, the best course of action was for me to control the Valkyries. However, I will never let that sort of incident happen again after this time. I will keep my guards by my side at all times and only let my guards have more rights than the Valkyries.

I rode on my horse next to the horse carriage with the Elven King sword at my waist. Perhaps I truly moved Elizabeth, leading to her trusting me with her safety and even giving me the Elven King sword that she had always carried with her. That said, I'm stuck for ideas to break Mom's cage.

I can't destroy the Royal Palace that Mom resides in, but I can crush the vassals around Mom, though. I can get her to leave her cage. I can bring Mom to my side. The system Mom employs is best suited in such a society where the ability to produce to a certain extent has yet to be reached. Totalitarianism is more suited for development. If I forcefully change society's evolution, I'll just end up destroying this empire.

I don't want to change this empire, and I shouldn't change this empire. I want my own empire. I want my own world. I want to establish a nation where I'm not questioned just as Mom isn't questioned in her empire. Nobody will question me there, and nobody will harm the people around me.

I escorted Luna's casket back to Troy City. Though I still see Luna's smile when I close my eyes even now, I won't have my face smothered with my tears. I'll feel very upset, but I won't feel guilty because of Luna anymore. I just dearly miss the days when Luna was with me.

'I miss her so badly. I really love her.'

Fortunately, I'm able to send her home this time. I'm able to take her back to that most beautiful sea of flowers. I think Luna would smile if she could see it. I believe that the sea of flowers will bloom for Luna after this. Luna's smile is the brightest thing in that sea of flowers. From now on, flowers will bloom when Luna smiles.

I now have a place that will allow me to commemorate Luna, as well, the same way I can commemorate Mera.

I've travelled this road so many times and every single time I've walked it, it's been filled with a heavy stench of blood.

Once I get back to Troy City this time, I intend to stay outside for some time. After all, I'm going to be under house arrest in the outer court. I'm certain that Mom is absolutely serious. If I refuse, I'll definitely be dragged back there.

"Onii-sama!!"

As soon as my guard unit and I dismounted at the palace, a small silhouette leapt over to me and hugged me tightly. I hugged her and touched her small head. I softly asked, "What's wrong, Freya?"

"I was so worried about you, Onii-sama! You're too reckless! What would I do if you died over there for storming the Royal Palace?! What do you expect us to do?!"

Freya raised her head up from my chest and hammered my chest with hard hammer fists. She sobbed as she complained, "You made us worry so much. What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to tell Her Highness to lead an

attack on Hilles City?! Plus, if something happened to you, Her Highness would definitely destroy this empire!”

“I believe that Mommy Elizabeth wouldn’t do anything to me. That’s why I went back. Of course, I was prepared to storm in with force if she didn’t apologise.” I gently touched the casket next to me and solemnly continued, “But I accomplished my goal in the end. I picked Luna up. We can take her home now.”

“Mm... Miss Luna...?”

Freya released me. She looked at the casket in front of her with a sad look and softly said, “Miss Luna was akin to an older sister who always took the utmost care of me. She always took care of me. Always... I truly never thought that I would part with her because of this...”

“I never imagined it would end this way, either.”

I made a long sigh. I then stroked Freya’s head gently, “I couldn’t stay by Luna’s side forever, and she died for me. I couldn’t see her off in the end, so I, at least, need to send her home... I can take her to where she should be.”

“Mm... Onii-sama, I, too, wish to send Miss Luna home, then. I am to blame for Miss Luna’s death, too. If I was more vigilant, if I made it back in time, she would not... she would not have had to die. You also would not have suffered so much.”

Freya looked vexed. She looked at the ground with her fists tightly clenched. Her eyes were filled with regret and resentment.

She was genuinely vexed. I’m sure she couldn’t forgive herself for her impulsiveness at the time. Such an amateur trick shouldn’t have been able to catch her off guard, but maybe she fell for such a sloppy trick, because she was too worked up at the time. She can’t be blamed, though. You can only say that I was too careless, as I overlooked the possibility of them going after Freya.’

‘Moreover, I went and told Alice our plans back then. That’s what led to Freya’s failure. So at the end of the day, it was my fault for lacking vigilance.’

‘I almost got Freya killed, too.’

'Luckily there was that guard... What was his name again...? I've forgotten... What was his name? Whatever, I'll put that aside for now. I'll reward him later.'

"Let us go now then, Onii-sama. Her Highness has been waiting for you for a long time. If you still had not returned, we really would not have been able to stop her. Although Miss Nier and Miss Lucia were both very worried about you, too, they still desperately tried to stop Her Highness."

I chuckled helplessly. Vyvyan did say she'd be back once she finished business. She must be back already.

"Is she looking for me for something?"

"Of course it is about your coronation. Your coronation."

Freya giggled. She then looked at me and congratulated me, "Congratulations, Your Majesty. You just need to return to the elven side, and you will be able to succeed the throne. Her Highness has already prepared everything. You just need to return and succeed the throne. Congratulations, esteemed Elven King."

Ch. 50

I never expected Vyvyan was making me the Elven King when I returned this time. It turned out everything she did was a succession ceremony.

'Please tell me how making a trip to humanity's lands to bring Luna back resulted in me becoming the Elven King. I'm not being modest. I truly can't figure it out for the life of me. Go ask someone brighter... Yeah, get lost!'

'I'm Vyvyan's only son, so the throne should naturally be mine. However, I have no intention of becoming the Elven King. Firstly, I don't know the elves as well as I know humans. Secondly, Vyvyan is more suited to the role than I am. As a demi-god, Vyvyan's lifespan is unknown. She might even be able to live longer than I can, so what business do I have being the Elven King?'

'Vyvyan wasn't giving me the throne to console me, but to keep me there. If I became the Elven King, I wouldn't be able to run about. I'll have to stay in the elven Imperial Capital the same way Vyvyan does for a long time. If she did this

in the past, I wouldn't have been too averse to the idea, but I really want to head outside now.'

'Not only do I want to go outside and go around, I want to create a great nation. I want to create a nation according to my desires. The people around me will be proud, because of me. Nobody will question my authority to rule. Those who are loyal to me will be proud that they're loyal to me, and there won't be anybody who gets hurt because of me.'

'That's the sort of nation I want. I want to become a ruler as my moms are. I want to have the right to take revenge. If anyone around me gets hurt again, I want to make a city bleed a river as Mom did. I want to kill all those involved as I did before. I want that sort of authority. I want the highest power. I want the power to determine the lives of others the same way I decided the lives of the group of people I murdered not long ago. That's the sort of authority I want. If I had it sooner, I would've been able to behead Alice!'

'I must possess that sort of power. That sort of stuff can only be avoided by wielding power. I must have that sort of power. I must have the authority and ability to kill all traitors. I want to kill all of those sorts of people as I did with that last group. I want to kill them all.'

'Killing itself is just a means to an end. It's a method used to strike fear into people. Only by striking fear into others can I protect those around me. I wouldn't mind killing group after group if that's what it takes to protect those around me. I don't mind killing more people regardless of whether it's necessary or not. I don't care if they're innocent or deserve it. I'll kill anyone necessary, so that nobody dares to approach those around me! I want to make them fear me!'

'I don't have anyone left around me who can meet with harm. I'm only left with Freya, Nier, Lucia and my mothers. If something happens to them, I won't have any reason to continue living in this world. That's why I don't have a choice. I won't stop others from killing those around me anymore. I'm just going to kill them.'

Vyvyan was a little excited. She hugged me as she touched my head and with a giggle, said, "Son, how does it feel to become the Elven King? It's actually very simple to become the Elven King, Son. You have a very great image in the eyes

of elves. You handled the Earth Dragons, and you performed fabulously in the deer hunting festival. The elders have no issue with your appointment. Further, with your lineage, you can receive the support of all the people. You are the descendant of the Galadriel Tribe we are most proud of. Son, Mommy has prepared everything already. You just need to return and take over.”

“Mom... I...”

I looked up at Vyvyan. Vyvyan looked into my eyes. Her expression changed before I said anything. She looked at my eyes and spaced out. She then tightly clasped my face. Her eyes were filled with anxiety and sadness. She looked into my eyes as though she found something that should’ve been there, but had vanished.

“Son, Son, tell me, what happened to you?!”

Vyvyan gripped my face particularly tightly as if she was going to rip my skin off. I tried to back off a little as it hurt, but she didn’t let go. She looked into my eyes and impatiently shouted, “What did you do?! Did you kill?! How many people did you kill?! Why did you kill?! Why did you kill?! Son! Tell me! What did that woman Elizabeth make you do?!!!!”

“Mom... they killed my Luna... they...”

“I already warned you about killing!!”

Vyvyan shouted at me. Her entire body trembled. Her tears ran down from her blue eyes. She looked at me and cried. She said, “Son... what... what did you do...? Why did this happen...? Son... Mommy told you... not to kill people out of vengeance or delight... Don’t do this... Do you realise you’re ruining yourself with this...? Mommy spent over ten years trying to prevent letting you become another Elizabeth. Why did you still turn out this way in the end...? Tell me, did Luna come back to life after you killed those people?! Your ‘I killed them for Luna’ is just an excuse! You merely killed for the sake of killing!”

“Mom! The people I killed were the ones who killed Luna! I killed them, so that Luna could rest in peace, and so that I could be at peace! Mom, do you know... do you know how much pain I’m in?! I wake up with my face smothered in tears, because I dream of her! My heart screeches whenever I see things related to Luna. I only have one Luna! Only one! She’s gone! She’s dead! Am I

not allowed to avenge her?! Can't I?!"

"What's the point of your vengeance?! What did you get out of killing those people?! You're just killing to deceive yourself! Mommy told you to never swing your sword for revenge. Son, the light in your eyes Mommy wants to see most is not there anymore! What do you want?! Why did you become the same as Elizabeth, too?! Why?! Mommy tried so hard... Mommy tried so hard... Why did you still end up this way...?"

Vyvyan tightly gripped my chest and cried. I hugged Vyvyan and spaced out. I didn't know what to say. I couldn't detect myself changing.

'What exactly did Vyvyan see? Am I really changing? I haven't changed. It's this world that's forcing my hand. This is the only way I'll survive. This is the only way...'

"Don't kill again... Mommy is begging you... don't kill again... If you continue this way... you'll become a second Elizabeth... Please... come home with Mommy... come home with Mommy and live a peaceful life... don't... Don't continue with this!!"

Vyvyan looked up. It was the first time she looked at me with this sort of pleading expression. I looked at mom. I looked at her blue eyes. I shook my head with my teeth clenched, "Sorry, Mom... I can't return just yet. If I return now, I won't be able to leave again. I still have things that I want to do. I still have things that I must do..."

Ch. 51

"Goodnight, then..."

Castell made a small bow, and then closed the door to her room. Elizabeth sighed. Right after she picked up the cup with her sleeping medication placed at her bedhead, she hesitated for a moment before placing it back down. She looked at her empty surroundings then picked up the long sword by the side of her bed. She coldly said, "Vyvyan, if you're going to come here, come in through the main door."

A gust of wind blew, and then Vyvyan appeared from the side. She wore an obvious look of anger on her face as she looked at Elizabeth. Elizabeth sighed. She sat up and asked, "Why are you so angry? If you want to talk about the incident, I have no response. It was my mistake. My son has already finished talking about it with me, too. What else do you want?"

Vyvyan looked at Elizabeth and raged, "That's not what I'm here for! Yes, I'm extremely angry, but that's not what I'm here to talk about! Why did you make my son kill?! Why did you make my son kill?! I spent over ten years trying to prevent him from becoming a blood-thirsty monster, like you, so why did you let him kill?! Why?!!!!"

Seated from her bed, Elizabeth looked at Vyvyan. Her anger gradually appeared in her eyes. She indifferently replied, "He's my son. I can get him to do anything I want. Isn't it the same for you? Why does my son have to love you, you old hag, and carry on your bloodline?"

"That's different!" Vyvyan looked at Elizabeth and clenched her fists tightly. She suppressed her voice as she roared, "I did it for my son's future and happiness. Without me, how could he be with the girl he likes? But what about you? You had my son kill. You made him turn into the blood-thirsty monster you are! Do you know how much my heart aches?!"

Elizabeth met Vyvyan's eyes and fearlessly responded, "That's your heart that's aching. I, on the other hand, am glad and consoled."

"You bitch!"

"Vyvyan, have you not overlooked something?" Elizabeth looked at Vyvyan, who was fuming with rage. She stood up, pressed her hand on her shoulder and went on, "He's my son. I want him to become the way I want him to. That's my responsibility as a mother!"

"Dream on! You still have the gall to call yourself a mother? You've never educated him! I gave him everything he has! I'm the one who gave him everything he has! What right do you have to just come around and ruin all of this?! What right do you have to ruin my child as a mother?! I won't let my son turn out the same way as you! He's the next Elven King, not a tyrant like you!"

Vyvyan smacked Elizabeth's hand away, and then tightly grabbed Elizabeth's

neck. She stared intently at Elizabeth with her blood-red eyes. She couldn't wish for anything more than to crush her neck.

“What do you want me to do then?!”

Elizabeth choked Vyvyan back and stared at her furiously. She struggled as she said “What can I do?! What else can I do?! I tried to protect my son, but I can't! I've tried my best already! The person I trusted the most wanted to harm my son! What else can I do?! My personal attendant hid it from me, while my personal bodyguard wanted to kill my son! Who do you want me to trust?! Who else can I trust? Who else can my son trust?! He can't trust anyone, but himself, so what other ways does he have to protect himself other than by killing people?! All I did was show my son how to survive! We're not violent! It's the world that's always betraying us!”

“You don't need to teach him that! I can protect my son!”

“You're different to me!”

The two of them released each other and panted. Elizabeth looked at Vyvyan while continuing to pant. She thundered, “You're different to me! You're a demi-god! You have mana! You have a long lifespan! He's forever a child next to you! I can't, though! I can't protect my son. I have no way of being at his side. If I didn't make it back in time this time, my son would be dead! Do you understand how afraid I am?! Do you know how afraid I am?! If I could always protect him the way you do, I'd want to give him a happy life and to allow him to be carefree, as well, but I can't! This incident taught me a lesson! I must make my son understand what life is! He won't survive if he doesn't kill!”

“He can survive as long as he's with me! As long as he's by my side as my son, he'll be fine! He doesn't need to do anything! He's my only son! I don't want him to shoulder so much! You dumped your world on his shoulders! Doesn't that make your heart ache?!”

Vyvyan took two steps back then continued shouting, “I'm going to take my son back! He's my son! I won't let him become someone like you! I don't want to see a thick layer of murderous intent in his eyes! He shouldn't have that sort of gaze! He shouldn't reek of blood!”

“You dare?!”

Elizabeth drew her long sword, and then aggressively exclaimed, “He’s my son! He still needs to be grounded here for a month and you want to take him away? I dared to wage a war for him ten years ago, and I still have that same determination now! How my son turns out is my business. What right do you have to decide how my son should be?!”

Vyvyan took in a big breath then formed a flame on her hand. She looked at Elizabeth with a cold gaze, “Ten years ago, I managed to burn your breasts, and I still can do it now, but your old body can’t take it now, can it?”

Elizabeth coldly responded, “That’s if you can create a flame before I run my sword through your neck! Everyone dies when their throat gets pierced no matter when.”

The atmosphere between the two became more oppressive. Their eyes no longer contained any courtesy and kindness for each other. All that was left was a heavy killing intent just as when they faced off underneath the elven Imperial Capital a decade ago. The last time, the two mothers drew their swords on each other for their son. And this time, it was for the same reason, except that the result might not be the same.

“Your Majesty, I heard an uproar... Ah!!!”

As soon as Castell opened the door, he was frightened by the scene before him. Vyvyan furiously whipped her head. An iron fist suddenly took shape in the air and brutally smashed into Castell’s chest, sending him flying out. Like an enraged lion, Vyvyan whipped her head and said, “I must take my son back. I won’t allow him to appear on human soil again.”

Elizabeth made a quick glance at Castell, who pathetically got to his feet. She then turned back to face Vyvyan and coldly said, “Try it. If I can’t contact my child, I’ll charge over the next day!”

“Try it. I wasn’t scared of you ten years ago, and I won’t be scared this time, either. It’s just a war, big deal. This time, my elves will go to war on you for their new King!”

A strong wind rose and blew Elizabeth’s black hair upwards. By the time her hair blew in the wind, Vyvyan had already vanished from sight. Castell walked up to Elizabeth and looked at her feeling confused.

The Empress looked outside the window as though she had returned ten years into the past when she gave the order for the army to march. She held her sword and commanded, “Castell, prepare to gather the army. Prepare for battle. It’s been ten years. It’s time for the war that ended abruptly last time to start again.”